

Some Practical Helps in Disciplining Your Children

by Al Troester

If there is ever a need in any area of life, it certainly is in child training. There is a breakdown here in many homes at this point so that "discipline" is almost a bad word.

There needs to be a proper understanding of the nature of discipline. The tendency is to think that discipline is always negative or that it is always punishment. While punishment must be involved, it is only a part of discipline and not the whole of it.

Discipline, according to the dictionary, is:

- I. (as a verb) 1. To train to obedience or effectiveness; drill; educate. 2. To punish.
- II. (as a noun) 1. Systematic training, as of a soldier; subjection; progressive molding of character and conduct. 2. Punishment; correction; chastisement. 3. A system of rules, as of a church.

We need to think of discipline primarily as child training or child rearing which includes instruction, guidance, direction, teaching, character building, and personality development. A child must learn obedience, respect for authority, honor, decency, the value of the good things in life, how to live with decorum, the know how to do the simple chores and necessities of life, good habits, and the practical things of cleanliness, godliness, social life, and even sexual life as age allows. A child is under discipline all the days of childhood and into the teen years. Teaching a child to brush his or her teeth is discipline. Teaching how to make a bed is discipline. Showing a child how to tie a shoe is discipline, teaching a child to pick up the toys is discipline. Telling a child how to say please and thank you is discipline. Instructing a child how to sit up to the table is discipline. Correcting a child when something was done wrong is discipline. Punishment for disobedience is discipline. Rewarding for something well done is discipline.

I. DISCIPLINE BEGINS WITH THE PARENTS.

- A. God's purpose in parents is to train, instruct, discipline, guide, protect, and provide for the children. While it should be a natural God given instinctive trait, there is much that can be learned in the "know how" from personal experience, from the experience of others, and by instruction from those who are able on the subject.
- B. The discipline of children is a parental partnership, should be mutually understood, and a shared responsibility.
- C. The Bible teaches child discipline (Prov. 1:8,9; 4:1; 13:24; 23:13,14; 22:6;

Eph. 6:1-4).

- D. Parents must make sure they are living a victorious Christian life themselves so they are in a proper frame of mind to teach their children.
- E. They should be together in their own manner of life before they seek to raise children. The lives of parents need to be exemplary in all aspects if they want to be a living testimony to the children.
- F. Parents need to be together in their philosophy of discipline. When one disciplines a child by way of some form of punishment, the other should not interfere nor mitigate the punishment unless cruelty is practiced.
- G. Perhaps the biggest problem in discipline is within the parents themselves. Unresolved problems as a parent will be a hindrance in child training.
- H. Much of a child's discipline will depend on the attitude of the parents in disciplining. It must always be done in love, consideration, understanding of the child, the reason for and nature of punishment.
- I. Mother and father must provide a loving, joyful, peaceful atmosphere in the home, free of frictions, argumentation, misunderstanding, emotional upsets, and worldly living. All these influence the child.
- J. Parents should take time for family devotions in order to train the children respect for God, His Word, faith in Jesus Christ, and how to live a Christian life.
- K. Parents should take their children to Sunday School and church regularly.

II. HELPFUL HINTS AND SUGGESTIONS IN CHILD TRAINING

- A. Children vary in personality, temperament, nature, character, mentality, emotional makeup. All need training, but not all need to be disciplined the same way. The way one child is disciplined may not work with another child.
- B. Discipline should be in keeping with the nature of the offense. There are more ways to discipline a child than always resorting to spanking. However, whatever the method of discipline, it should always be with firmness.
- C. Discipline includes developing your child's potentials early in life as you discover them.
- D. Always let your child know in word and action that you love him or her. Never discipline a child in anger and apart from love.
- E. Your child must learn to obey you. There is no excuse for disobedience except in the inability of parents to practice discipline. A child should not be allowed to rule the roost and control your lives as parents.
- F. Children need discipline and become frustrated when they are not disciplined.
- G. Discipline is positive action on the part of parents and is like guiding a grapevine up a trellis, peas on a chicken wire, or pruning a dahlia for a showpiece. "It is training up a child in the way he should go" (Proverbs 22:6).
- H. A child's will needs to be broken and become submissive to authority without breaking the child's spirit. A strong will in a child can be positive, but to be self-willed is not good and this cannot be allowed. A strong willed

child may want its own way without any interference but this cannot be allowed for the good of the child. If not curbed in early life, there can be an uncontrollable child in the teen years that can cause sorrow.

- I. Keep your child occupied in the positive. It is good to give a child something to do that is constructive. Children like to help and can be given something to do that can be helpful. It not only can be a teaching experience but keeps them out of trouble. They can learn to do some little chore every day. This will teach responsibility, usefulness, and a feeling of helpfulness. Make it a joyful experience.
- J. Take time to play with your children. During these times you can teach them respect for the "how" to do things rightly, according to rules, and in cooperation with others. It is also a good place to teach attitudes.
- K. Keep your child away from watching TV unless it is a positive children's story, a good religious program, or good music. TV has the wrong philosophy of life and can do more harm to your child than good. It can fill the mind with wrong desires, bad imaginations, unwholesome thoughts, and develop a dream world fantasy.
- L. Pray and trust God for your children. God gave them to you and will help you to train them properly.
- M. Allow your child to investigate and experiment but under your surveillance and not to his or her own hurt, the hurt of others, the destruction of things, or the property of others. The child may think it to be cute and you may too if you do not understand the nature of good discipline.

III. SOME DON'TS IN CHILD DISCIPLINE.

- A. Don't force an old head on a young shoulder. A child is a child and should be allowed to live as a child.
- B. Don't be so strict that a child becomes fearful of almost any action in your presence and feels uncomfortable around you. You can depress your child and develop an inferiority complex in him or her.
- C. Don't magnify the child's negatives to the child. The child may never come to the place of feeling secure or adequate about anything later in life.
- D. Don't give in to any form of disobedience but always follow through with some form of chastisement in keeping with the offense.
- E. Don't threaten the child with any form of punishment if you will not carry it out.
- F. Don't constantly beg your child to do something or to obey. Speak once with authority and let your child know by your tone of voice and customary follow through with discipline that you mean what you say and expect obedience.
- G. Don't tease your child into action or try to shamefully embarrass him or her. You can cause serious and deep wounds to a child's personality and cause lack of confidence in you.
- H. Don't compare your child with another child either in or out of the family. Let your child develop his or her own personality and be as different as God

made him or her to be.

- I. Don't provoke your child to wrath.
- J. Don't treat teenagers like children. They still must be disciplined, however, and be taught obedience and respect for you. Give them a little rope where they can be trusted.
- K. Don't argue with your child. A child must learn to have respect for what you say and have confidence in your opinions.
- L. Don't spoil your child by allowing him or her to always have his or her way.
- M. Don't allow your children to form bad habits. Some may come from you. They rely upon you for examples.
- N. Don't make promises to them that you will not keep.
- O. Don't be inconsistent in your discipline as it only makes for confusion and frustration.
- P. Don't make fun of their fears. They may only be on a child's level but they are real to them.
- Q. Don't correct your child in front of people unless necessity demands it. It only embarrasses them and you may lose their respect.