

# DISCIPLESHIP & FAMILY MINISTRY



# Intergenerational Faithfulness

**SPRING/SUMMER 2013 • VOLUME 3 • ISSUE 2**



---

# THE JOURNAL OF DISCIPLESHIP & FAMILY MINISTRY

---

EQUIPPING THE GENERATIONS FOR GOSPEL-CENTERED LIVING

## Intergenerational Faithfulness

VOLUME 3 • ISSUE 2 SPRING/SUMMER 2013

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:  
R. Albert Mohler Jr.

EXECUTIVE EDITOR:  
Randy Stinson

EDITOR:  
Timothy Paul Jones

PEER REVIEW AND ADVISORY BOARD:  
Gregg Allison, Phillip Bethancourt, William  
Cutrer, Nathan Finn, Hal Pettegrew, Brian  
Richardson, Stuart Scott, John Mark Yeats

MANAGING EDITOR AND WEB CONTENT EDITOR:  
Derek Brown

ASSOCIATE EDITORS:  
Dustin Bruce, W. Ryan Steenburg

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR:  
Lilly Park

COVER ILLUSTRATION:  
Ashley Dunn

TYPOGRAPHER:  
Ashley Dunn

EDITORIAL OFFICE AND SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES:  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary,  
Cooke Hall 112,  
2825 Lexington Road,  
Louisville, Kentucky  
40280

EDITORIAL EMAIL:  
familyministry@sbts.edu

twitter.com/familyequipping  
www.familyministrytoday.com

### 02 RESEARCH BRIEF AND EDITORIAL

Timothy Paul Jones

---

### FEATURED ARTICLES

---

#### 08 HOLLY ALLEN WITH CHRISTINE ROSS

Why Churches Tended to Separate the Generations

#### 16 HOLLY ALLEN WITH CHRISTINE ROSS

The Benefits of Intergenerationality

#### 24 JOSHUA MULVIHILL

A New Way of Life for the Old

#### 36 DAVID MCGEE AND BRYCE HANTLA

A Portrayal of Fathers in Popular Media

#### 48 ANDY NASELLI

Training Children for Their Good

---

### REGULAR FEATURES

---

#### 66 FAMILY PHYSICIAN: THE POISON OF PORNOGRAPHY

William Cutrer, M.D.

#### 72 JDPM FORUM: EQUIPPING STUDENTS FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

Bobby Blakey with Derek Brown

#### 78 BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by Lilly Park

#### 86 EQUIPPING THE GENERATIONS

Raymond Johnson, Aaron Williams, Grant Castleberry, Andy Johnson

#### 98 A TRIBUTE TO DR. CUTRER

Yearly subscription costs for two issues: Individual inside the U. S., \$30; individual outside the U.S., \$50; institutional inside the U. S., \$50; institutional outside the U. S., \$70. Opinions expressed in *The Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* are solely the responsibility of the authors and are not necessarily those of the editors, members of the Peer Review and Advisory Board, or participants in forum articles. We encourage the submission of letters, suggestions, and articles by our readers. Any article submissions should conform to the *Journal of Biblical Literature* stylistic guidelines. The editorial philosophy

will be unapologetically consistent with *The Baptist Faith and Message* (2000) and with the seminary's *Abstract of Principles* (1858). This periodical is indexed in *ATLA Religion Database*, a product of the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606 USA. E-mail: atla@atla.com, http://www.atla.com/.

*THE JOURNAL OF DISCIPLESHIP AND FAMILY MINISTRY* is published semi-annually by the Gheens Center for Christian Family Ministry, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY 40280. Fall/Winter 2012. Vol. 3, No. 1. Copyright © 2012 The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. ISSN 2152-6397. Second-class postage paid at Louisville, Kentucky. Postmaster: Send address changes to: The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Cooke Hall 112, 2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, Kentucky 40280.



# Training Children for Their Good<sup>1</sup>

ANDY DAVID NASELLI



Andy Naselli (Ph.D., Bob Jones University; Ph.D., Trinity Evangelical Divinity

School) is Research Manager for D. A. Carson, Administrator for *Themelios*, and adjunct professor of Bible and Theology at several colleges and seminaries. Andy has published several book reviews, articles, and is the author of *Let Go and Let God: A Survey and Analysis of Keswick Theology, From Typology to Doxology*, and contributor to *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*. Andy is married to Jenni and father to Kara Marie, Gloria Grace, and Emma Elyse.

We tend to hold very strong views about parental discipline, and those views are often rooted in our experience. Perhaps we experienced physical abuse or something that we think is close to it, or perhaps we never experienced physical discipline at all. (I'm the second of seven children, reared for most of my life by loving Christian parents, and my parents did not abuse me. That certainly influences how I approach the issue.) Perhaps we grew up in a church environment that was extremely strict about enforcing guidelines but very weak on applying the gospel to every aspect of parenting.

In any case, it seems like we tend to react strongly to our experience. And since one person's experiences never completely match another's, there is simply no way to approach this subject in a way that seems completely "balanced" to everyone because we have such a wide range of perspectives. Because of those different perspectives, people may disagree on what aspects of parental discipline we

should emphasize. Our life-experiences strongly influence how we approach the issue and what we emphasize to correct what we perceive as prevalent errors in our various contexts.

To further complicate things: (1) I'm only thirty-two years old. (2) Jenni and I have been married for only eight years (almost). (3) We have only three children, and they're all young: one turns four this week; one is fourteen months old; and we have a C-section scheduled for the third child in four weeks. One of my children hasn't even breathed oxygen yet.

This novice position puts me at some disadvantage. It's like asking a young soldier on active duty to address a group about how to excel in the military when that group includes fellow soldiers and some military veterans. My friend Mike Wittmer joked with me, "It's probably important to preach this now, before you have teenagers, because I hear that then we'll be too embarrassed to give parenting counsel."

Those who are older generally have a more mature and wise perspective. So I want to acknowledge upfront that I have a lot of maturing to do and a lot of wisdom to gain. So I don't plan to draw primarily on my relatively limited reserve of knowledge and wisdom from life-experiences. I'm not sprinkling this article with illustrations about my own children!

Instead I'm going to draw on the wisdom of other

mature Christians (some of whom I'll quote) and focus on explaining some writings that some very wise people wrote two or three thousand years ago. But these writings don't have authority from their antiquity or because the human authors were so wise; they have authority because God himself breathed the words.<sup>2</sup> So by God's grace I herald and proclaim these words, and that's where my authority primarily lies—in the text, not my experience. What then does God's Word teach about parental discipline?

## 1. SEVEN PROPOSITIONS ABOUT DISCIPLINE FROM HEBREWS 12:4–11

Let's begin by looking at one of the foundational passages related to parental discipline in the NT: Hebrews 12:4–11. The context is that the author is addressing Christians who are suffering. Note the repetition of the word “discipline”; it occurs at least once in every verse except the first one:

<sup>4</sup> In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. <sup>5</sup> And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, “My son, do not make light of the Lord's **discipline**, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, <sup>6</sup> because the Lord **disciplines** the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” (Prov 3:11–12)<sup>7</sup> Endure hardship as **discipline**; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not **disciplined** by their father? <sup>8</sup> If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. <sup>9</sup> Moreover, we have all had human fathers who **disciplined** us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! <sup>10</sup> They **disciplined** us for a little while as they thought best; but God **disciplines** us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. <sup>11</sup> No **discipline** seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, **it** produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by **it**.<sup>3</sup>

What does this passage teach about parental discipline? We can derive at least seven propositions about parental **discipline** from this text:

### Proposition 1. God disciplines his children (Heb 12:5–7, 10).

This passage distinguishes two categories of people: those who are God's children and those who are not.<sup>4</sup> God's children are his people, that is, believers. And the text says that God disciplines his children:

My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, <sup>6</sup> because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.” [Prov 3:11–12]  
<sup>7</sup> Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. . . . <sup>10</sup> God disciplines us . . .

The text explicitly asserts that God disciplines his children.

But what does *discipline* mean? According to the standard Greek dictionary of the NT and other early Christian literature (BDAG),<sup>5</sup> the noun translated “discipline” (παιδεία, paideia: vv. 5, 7, 8, 11) means “the act of providing guidance for responsible living, *upbringing, training, instruction* . . . chiefly as it is attained by *discipline, correction*.”

The verb “discipline” (παιδεύω, paideuō: vv. 6, 7, 10) means “to assist in the development of a person's ability to make appropriate choices, *practice discipline*.” It has two subsets: (a) “*correct, give guidance*” and (b) “discipline w. punishment” (BDAG). This passage focuses on “discipline with punishment”—the kind that is initially unpleasant and painful (v. 11).

Sometimes people use the term “punishment” synonymously with “discipline.” What is important is to distinguish these two *concepts* since the words can overlap based on how people use them:

Discipline is corrective; it seeks to accomplish a change in the one being disciplined. Punishment is meted out in the simple interests of justice. In bringing up children, parents should be disciplin-

ing them. In hanging a murderer, the civil magistrate is not disciplining—he is punishing.<sup>6</sup>

So God disciplines his children. But which ones?

**Proposition 2. God disciplines all his children (Heb 12:6, 8).**

<sup>6</sup>... he chastens **everyone** he accepts as his son.”...

<sup>8</sup>If you are not disciplined—and everyone **undergoes discipline**—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.

So God disciplines *all* his children. But does he discipline others?

**Proposition 3. God disciplines *only* his children (Heb 12:6–8).**

<sup>6</sup>because **the Lord disciplines the one he loves**, and he chastens everyone **he accepts as his son.**” [Prov 3:11–12]

<sup>7</sup>Endure hardship as discipline; God is **treating you as his children**. For what children are not disciplined by their father? <sup>8</sup>**If you are not disciplined**—and everyone undergoes discipline—**then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.**

God’s discipline demonstrates that he loves you and that you are his child. It’s evidence that you are his child. Discipline is not bad. It’s good. It’s actually a very bad sign if discipline is absent because it means that love is absent. God disciplines his children because he loves them.

Humans are made in God’s image, and he treats his human children with dignity, compassion, and tenderness. And he disciplines them. That is not a contradiction. His discipline displays his love.

So God disciplines *only* his children. But what’s the point of his discipline?

**Proposition 4. Discipline is training: God disciplines his children for their good (Heb 12:10–11).**

<sup>10</sup>They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but **God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.** <sup>11</sup>No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it **produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it [i.e., discipline].**

Discipline trains us to be righteous. Discipline is not an end in itself. It *trains* us for a specific end: “for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness” (v. 10).

God’s discipline is not sadistic, nor is he lashing out in unrighteous anger, frustration, or revenge. He disciplines with a long-term view for our well-being. His discipline is a means for us to become holy, righteous, and peaceful.

So discipline is training. It’s important to remember this because it’s easy to forget when we are experiencing it. How does discipline feel?

**Proposition 5. Discipline seems unpleasant and painful (Heb 12:11).**

<sup>11</sup>No discipline seems<sup>7</sup> **pleasant** at the time, but **painful**. . . .

If it doesn’t seem unpleasant, then it’s not discipline. If it doesn’t seem painful, then it’s not discipline.

I should probably say, “If it doesn’t seem unpleasant and painful, then it’s not *this kind* of discipline.” The Hebrew and Greek words for discipline have a range of meaning. Sometimes they refer merely to teaching, exhorting, or warning and not necessarily to physical discipline or chastening. Teaching, exhorting, and warning are not always unpleasant (though they can be), nor are they always painful (though they can be). But since v. 11 says that discipline *always* seems unpleasant and painful, it must be referring specifically to corrective discipline—the kind that is unpleasant and painful. Try using the other common renderings for this Greek word for discipline (παιδεία, paideia) here, and they don’t work. For example: “No *instruction* seems pleasant at the time, but painful.” That doesn’t work because some instruction isn’t unpleasant or painful. In the context

of human parents and their children, what kind of discipline *always* seems unpleasant and painful? Physical discipline stands out most obviously.

The text compares how God disciplines his children to how parents physically discipline their children (cf. proposition 7 below). The second half of v. 6 says that God “*chastens* everyone he accepts as his son.” The verb “chastens” (μαστιγῶω, *mastigoō*) has two basic meanings: (1) “to beat with a whip or lash, *whip, flog, scourge*” and (2) “to punish with discipline in mind, *punish, chastise*” (BDAG). It’s the same word that the four Gospels use to describe the Romans’s *flogging* Jesus prior to his crucifixion (the first of the two meanings). And this text says that God *chastens* his children! God chastises his children with discipline that always seems unpleasant and painful. In context, the manner of discipline that the Hebrews have experienced includes physical suffering such as persecution and imprisonment (Heb 10:32–34).

So discipline seems unpleasant and painful. Experiencing it is not like opening birthday presents or eating ice cream; you don’t have to *endure* that:

**Proposition 6. God’s children should endure God’s discipline (Heb 12:5, 7, 9).**

This is the burden of the passage in context:<sup>8</sup>

My son, **do not make light** of the Lord’s discipline, and **do not lose heart** when he rebukes you, . . .

<sup>7</sup> **Endure hardship<sup>9</sup> as discipline**; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? . . . <sup>9</sup> Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and **we respected them for it. How much more should we submit** to the Father of spirits and live!

We can lose sight of this. In the midst of God’s discipline, we may be tempted to “make light of the Lord’s discipline” or “lose heart” (v. 5). But the author of Hebrews calls this reminder to endure a “word of encouragement” (v. 5).

So God’s children should endure God’s discipline. What do these first six propositions have to do with human parents and their children?

**Proposition 7. God’s disciplining his children compares to human parents’ disciplining their children (Heb 12:5, 7–10).**

<sup>5</sup> And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that **addresses you as a father addresses his son?** . . .

<sup>7</sup> Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. **For what children are not disciplined by their father?** <sup>8</sup> If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. <sup>9</sup> Moreover, **we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it.** How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! <sup>10</sup> **They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best;** but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.

This passage assumes that parents who love their children discipline their children. God himself disciplines his children, so disciplining your children is godly. It is good and right.

These seven propositions (especially the last one) raise an important question: What exactly does it look like when parents discipline their children? Verses 5–6 quote Proverbs 3:11–12, so this passage directly connects us to the book of Proverbs. The author of Hebrews assumes that the principles of Proverbs still apply to Christians. The Proverbs are good wisdom for God’s people today. So let’s trace that thread back to Proverbs to see what it teaches about training our children for their good.

**2. LEVELS OF DISCIPLINE IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS**

I’m borrowing in this section from Paul Wegner, professor of Old Testament at Phoenix Seminary.<sup>10</sup> Wegner memorably systematizes what the book of Proverbs teaches about parental discipline. He argues that there are four levels of discipline in the Book of Proverbs: three levels for parents and one for government:<sup>11</sup>

We should spend most of our time in level 1 (teach),

PRINCIPLES OF DISCIPLINE	BIBLICAL REFERENCES
<b>Level 1: Teaching the Guidelines</b>	
<b>Principle 1:</b> Teach Appropriate Behavior	Proverbs 1:8-9; 2:1-22; 3:1-35; 4:1-13; 6:20-26; 7:1-5; 8:1-36; 23:24-25
<b>Principle 2:</b> Inform of Improper Behavior	Proverbs 1:10-19; 4:14-27; 6:1-19; 7:6-21; 9:13-18; 22:24-25; 23:26-28
<b>Principle 3:</b> Explain the Negative Consequences of Disobedience	Proverbs 1:10-33; 5:1-23; 6:26-35; 7:22-27; 9:17-18; 10:1; 13:18; 14:14; 16:18, 26; 17:20; 18:13; 23:10-12; 24:17-20
<b>Level 2: Reiterating the Guidelines</b>	
<b>Principle:</b> Give Appropriate Warnings	Proverbs 1:7, 15, 19, 22, 28, 31-33; 2:11-19, 22; 3:7, 11; 4:2, 5-6, 14-19, 23-27; 5:3-16, 21-23; 6:1-5, 9-15, 25-35; 7:24-27; 8:33-36; 9:13-18; 10:1-24:34; 26:17-29:27; 31:2-9
<b>Level 3: Enforcing the Guidelines</b>	
<b>Principle 1:</b> A Reprimand with Non-Corporal Punishment	Proverbs 1:8; 3:12; 4:1-2, 10-27; 5:1-2; 6:1-5, 20-35; 7:1-5, 24-27; 23:22-23; 24:24-25; 25:12; 27:5-6; 28:23
<b>Principle 2:</b> A Reprimand with Non-Abusive Corporal Punishment	Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 23:13-14; 29:15
<b>BEYOND A PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY</b>	
<b>Level 4: Government's Role in Discipline</b>	
<b>Principle:</b> Continued Disobedience May Bring Severe Punishment	Proverbs 10:31; 20:30
[You will notice that Level 4 discipline falls outside the parent's responsibility, and we will look at this level later in the book. Even in Israel certain forms of punishment were not administered by parents (see Deuteronomy 21:18-21).]	

INCREASING SEVERITY



less time in level 2 (warn), and as little as possible in level 3 (enforce). The severity increases from teaching to warning to enforcing.

For example, here's how this might play out if you are in the grocery store parking lot with your three-year-old:

1. You may *teach* your child by saying, "Please hold Mommy's hand while we walk into the store. This is a parking lot with lots of moving cars, and I want you to stay safe."
2. If you feel their little hand tugging out of yours, you may *warn* your child by saying, "Do you see that car? You could get very hurt if you do not hold onto my hand. Please hold my hand, or if you choose to disobey, [fill in the blank]."
3. If your child pulls their hand out of yours and darts through the parking lot, you may *enforce* your guideline by saying, "You did not obey Mommy. You pulled your hand out of mine and ran in the parking lot. So since you chose to disobey, [fill in the blank]."

As time goes by there should be more teaching and less enforcing. The early years require a shorter distance from levels 1 to 3 (i.e., from teaching to enforcing), often getting to level 3 regularly. Parents may tend to warn, warn, warn, and rarely enforce. They may repeatedly say, "If you do that again, then [fill in the blank]." But these often become vain threats with no real sting.

### Level 1. Teach

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck. (Prov 1:8–9)

Parents must clearly explain to their children what they expect from their children. This takes so many forms, and it happens in every venue of life as parents spend time with their children (cf. Deut 6:6–9). Parents should . . .

- Talk about the gospel and how it applies to all areas of life

- Teach values by modeling for their children what they expect from their children
- State rules to their children
- Explain those rules
- Encourage and affirm their children
- Explain improper behavior in neutral contexts
- Connect sin with its consequences so that children see sin's long-term effects

### Level 2. Warn

Warning can save a person from danger:

Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men . . .

Wisdom will save you also from the adulterous woman . . . (Prov 2:12a, 16a)

God is patient and kind with us, and we should be patient and kind with our children. We need God's wisdom to know when to warn instead of enforce. When we warn, we clearly tell our children what will happen if they do not heed our warning. We warn about both short-term and long-term consequences. Short-term consequences include how we will enforce our guidelines if they break them.

### Level 3. Enforce

Wise parents are concerned primarily about their children's heart, not their external obedience:

Above all else, guard your heart,  
for everything you do flows from it. (Prov 4:23)

We don't want children who are *merely* externally compliant like good Pharisees or like the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son.<sup>12</sup> But external disobedience evidences heart problems. They are an opportunity to deal with heart issues. And when children disobey their parents, parents need God's wisdom regarding how to enforce their guidelines.

This may involve verbally rebuking our children,<sup>13</sup> revoking privileges, and sometimes physical discipline (e.g., "spanking"). The main idea here in Proverbs (especially in four passages that mention "the rod") is "that temporary punishment is better than allowing wickedness or evil to



run wild and lead to more serious punishment.”<sup>14</sup>

An increasing number of Christians reject physical discipline (or “spanking”) as one of the means of disciplining children. Some argue very passionately that it is wrong for a parent ever to spank their child.<sup>15</sup> This view is growing in popularity and influence.<sup>16</sup> Prominent books and blogs that argue against spanking raise at least five questions:<sup>17</sup>

**Question 1. Does “the rod” represent discipline but exclude *physical* discipline (Prov 13:24; 22:15; 23:13–14; 29:15)?**

Some Christians answer yes: Some argue that there’s a difference between “*a* rod” and “*the* rod.” For example, Proverbs 13:24 says, “Whoever spares *the rod* hates their children.” “A rod,” some argue, refers to physical discipline, but “the rod” is a metaphor for discipline that excludes physical discipline.<sup>18</sup>

Response: Distinguishing between “a rod” and “the rod” like that demonstrates a really poor grasp of how Hebrew grammar works. It’s a grammatical fallacy.<sup>19</sup>

Some argue that rod means in Proverbs what it does in Psalm 23: “your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Ps 23:4b). So if the rod is comforting, they argue, how can it be a tool for uncomfortable physical discipline?

In reply, I’ll quote an anti-spanking proponent named William Webb, who recently wrote an entire book against spanking. Here’s what he says about that argument:

I have to chuckle at some anti-spanking rhetoric by Christians who think that the “child and rod” proverbs in the Bible do not involve physical beatings at all. This popular notion among many lay Christians connects the “rod” of the child-discipline texts in Proverbs not with an instrument for beating children but with an instrument for shepherding a flock of sheep. As the argument goes, a shepherd does not hit the sheep with his rod but rather guides them gently along on the path that they should take. Such shepherding rod interpretations of the discipline texts of Proverbs amount to a lexical fallacy known as illegitimate totality transfer.<sup>20</sup> These anti-spankers wrongly drag material from one context [i.e., Ps 23] into another [i.e., “the

rod” passages in Proverbs] just because they share the same word. Furthermore, this shepherd’s rod interpretation conveniently forgets that the Hebrew word *beat* or *hit* (*nakah*) often goes along with the word rod in the discipline proverbs—an example of this combination is found in Proverbs 23:13–14. So the hitting or striking function of the rod within the corporal discipline passages is explicit and is different from the shepherding passages. Pro-spanking scholars rightly argue that the rod is an instrument used in bodily discipline to hit the child.<sup>21</sup>

I disapprove of the rhetoric “beat” and “hit.” But my point in quoting Webb is that he rightly acknowledges that the rod is a means of *physical* discipline. Webb concedes that point, but he goes on to argue that we should follow the Bible’s trajectory and move beyond the Bible to a better ethic that excludes physical discipline.<sup>22</sup> So Webb agrees with pro-spanking scholars that the rod is “probably a wooden stick of some sort” that parents use “to strike a child.”<sup>23</sup>

OT scholars whose works I’ve studied unanimously agree that the four passages in Proverbs that mention “the rod” at least *include* physical discipline. Wegner, for example, says that the rod “undoubtedly suggests some type of corporal punishment.”<sup>24</sup> The rod may be able to refer to multiple levels of discipline, but it certainly *includes* physical discipline (the kind that Heb 12:11 says seems unpleasant and painful).<sup>25</sup> So it’s wrong to argue that the rod *excludes* physical discipline.

Let’s look briefly at the four passages in Proverbs that mention “the rod”:

**Proverbs 13:24**

Whoever spares the rod hates their children,  
but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.

So parents who love their children discipline them using “the rod.” Bruce Waltke, an OT scholar who has authored perhaps the finest commentary available on Proverbs, notes that this proverb makes some assumptions: “[1] that folly is bound up in the heart of the child

(22:15; cf. Gen. 8:21). . . . [2] ‘that it will take more than just words to dislodge it’ [Kidner].”<sup>26</sup> One pastor shrewdly observes,

In order to have a garden full of weeds, it is not necessary to do anything. One must just let it go. And in order to have a home full of grief, it is not necessary to do anything either. Just let it go. . . . A man who does not spank his son hates his son. This does not mean that he is filled with emotional revulsion for his son. It means that the lack of discipline has a destructive impact on the future course of that son’s life. A parental refusal to discipline is therefore an act of hatred.<sup>27</sup>

That may overstate the case a bit, but it’s generally true. Perhaps we should say, “Parents who do not *discipline* their child hate their child.” Most children need physical discipline at some point, but that doesn’t mean that all do. Parents who have an unusually gentle and conscientious child who responds well to non-physical discipline shouldn’t feel guilty for not spanking them. It’s feasible that some children never or extremely rarely require any physical discipline because they are so externally compliant.<sup>28</sup> But the point is that properly administering physical discipline demonstrates love.

#### **Proverbs 22:15**

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,  
but the rod of discipline will drive it far away.

So “the rod” is a means to remove folly from your children. Our children are depraved, so we shouldn’t be surprised when they are bent on having their own way. Painful methods of discipline are a God-ordained means to train children for their good.

In 1984, when D. A. Carson was thirty-eight years old, he wrote an article called “Growing up a ‘PK’” (PK = pastor’s kid). He reflected on twelve features in his upbringing that shaped him, and one of those features was physical discipline:

Certain things evoked sure and certain punishment. One was willful disobedience; another was

sass. No surer way of bringing down the doom of Dad on our heads could be found than by sassing Mom. One of the spankings I received, however, and certainly one of those I remember most vividly, was for neither disobedience nor cheek, but for a whining, complaining attitude that had soured a two-hour journey for the entire family. I was perhaps eight or nine at the time, and it did me a great deal of good. I learned that endless complaining and whining were not only offensive to others but were likely to prove painful to me, and that my parents would not tolerate such behavior in their children. Yet their regime, though firm, was certainly not harsh or nasty. And sometimes my parents, especially my mother, would take some pains to explain exactly why I was being punished, inevitably working in something about her love for me.<sup>29</sup>

“The rod” is a means to remove folly from your children.

#### **Proverbs 23:13–14**

Do not withhold discipline from a child;  
if you punish them with the rod, they will not die.  
Punish them with the rod  
and save them from death.

So “the rod” is a means for saving children from death. Bruce Waltke explains and then cautions,

Severe discipline is not cruel, but to withhold it from callous youth is. . . . However, the cleansing rod must be applied with the warmth, affection and respect for the youth. Warmth and affection, not steely discipline, characterize the father’s lectures (cf. 4:1–9). Parents who brutalize their children cannot hide behind the rod-doctrine of Proverbs.<sup>30</sup>

#### **Proverbs 29:15**

A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom,  
but a child left undisciplined disgraces its mother.

“The rod” is a means for parents to impart wisdom

to their children and avoid disgrace.

So “the rod” includes physical discipline. But . . .

**Question 2. Is spanking a form of physical and psychological child abuse?**

Some Christians answer yes: *Spanking physically and psychologically damages children. Beating or hitting your children is cruel, unloving, and undignified. It's abusive.*

Response: First, note the rhetoric: sometimes people who oppose physical discipline refer to it as “beating” or “hitting” or “hurting” rather than “physical discipline” or “spanking” or “painful methods of discipline.” That is a common rhetorical move that slants the discussion. It's known as “spin” or “bias” in news stories.

The English word “hit” is a broad term that can include a civil magistrate striking a criminal, two people fighting each other, or a parent disciplining a child. But the actions are very different because of who is striking whom, how they are striking, and what is motivating the striking. The civil magistrate may be satisfying *justice*; two men fighting may be motivated by *hatred*, *jealousy*, or *self-defense* (to give just a few examples); and a parent properly disciplining a child is motivated by *love*. To call parental physical discipline “hitting” is a rhetorical move because the word “hit” has an overwhelmingly negative connotation.

Of course, we oppose beating or hitting our children. Unfortunately, some people equate physical discipline with abusive tactics like punching, backhanding, striking on the face, kicking, pushing, and public shaming. That is not what we mean by physical discipline. That is abusive. That is sin. That is heinous sin. And the last thing I want is for an abusive parent to think that this article justifies their abuse. This is a really difficult path to tread because many abusive parents do not think of themselves as abusive and think that they are giving appropriate physical discipline.

So yes, spanking is *sometimes* a form of child abuse, but it is not *always* a form of child abuse. Because we are depraved, we can abuse *any* form of discipline. Non-physical discipline can be abusive, and physical discipline can be abusive. But that doesn't mean that non-physical discipline or physical discipline are *always* abusive.

Wegner clarifies,

There is never any reason or justification for causing physical harm or danger to a child, even when spanking. . . . The [ultimate] goal of spanking is not to induce pain, but to teach the child that his or her behavior has crossed a boundary line. It is used only when the child has not responded appropriately to lower levels of discipline.<sup>31</sup>

Our own government recognizes this difference between “child abuse” and “corporal punishment or physical discipline.”<sup>32</sup>

A friend of mine adopted two sons from Ethiopia. One was physically abused—beaten—before my friend adopted him. This five-year-old child recently told his new daddy about how he used to be beaten, and my friend responded with great concern: “So when I spank you,” he began—but the child cut him off as his eyes got big with equally great concern: “Oh, no, daddy! That's different. You do that because you love me.”

When parents administer physical discipline properly (e.g., not in unrighteous anger), it shows that they love their children; it's a means of removing folly from them, and it imparts wisdom. At times it is spiritually abusive *not* to physically discipline your children.

So, yes, some parents who use physical discipline practice it sinfully. But is that a reason for rejecting it altogether? That would be like arguing that we shouldn't have preachers because some preachers sinfully abuse listeners by mishandling the text and manipulating the audience. That would be like arguing that we shouldn't distinguish between the complementary roles of husbands and wives (where husbands lovingly lead and wives submit) because some husbands sinfully abuse their wives with authoritarianism rather than sacrificially serving. Often people who strongly oppose spanking are reacting to abusive situations. Abuse is terrible, but we shouldn't reject physical discipline merely because some parents use it abusively.

Pastor-theologian John Piper asks,

What worldview inclines a person to think that you shouldn't spank a child? Where does that



come from? Well it comes straight out of this culture, I think. . . . I could give a whole theology of spanking here, but maybe I'll just boil it down. Why does this person feel squeamish about spanking? My guess is that it is a wrong view of God.<sup>33</sup>

Understandably, all sorts of questions arise regarding mechanics, for example:

- How old should the child be?
- Should we use our hand or an object like a wooden spoon?
- How many “swats” should we administer to the bottom and for what offenses?
- How frequently should this occur?

The Bible doesn't answer those questions, so we must ask God for wisdom that we can apply to our individual contexts. There's not one right method. The statements in Proverbs don't fully explain exactly how parents should discipline their children. The proverbs are pithy statements making a general point.<sup>34</sup>

So while spanking may be abusive, it is not abusive when parents spank rightly. But are parents spanking rightly when they spank children?

### **Question 3. Do the proverbs about using the rod refer to young men rather than children?**

Some Christians answer yes: *The word translated “child” means “young man.” So even if the rod does refer to physical discipline, it refers to physically disciplining only young men, not children—especially not little children.*

Response: The only people I'm aware of who argue this way are almost exclusively those who oppose spanking.<sup>35</sup> I'm not aware of a single English Bible translation that supports this view.

I asked Jack Collins<sup>36</sup> about this, and he replied,

The evidence that Proverbs as a whole is addressed to “young men” rather than children is unlikely to withstand examination. It touches on people in a whole range of ages and life situations. Besides, *na'ar* [the Hebrew word translated “child” in Prov

22:15; 23:13; 29:15] isn't the only word used. (And see 4:1–9 for an address aimed at the very young.) There are those who insist on spanking a child for everything. Then there are those who think any such thing is abuse. But those aren't the only two options. In my classes on Proverbs, I use the mnemonic *moderate, moral, and memorable*. I also point out that spanking is disciplinary and not retributive. If it injures the child, it is wrong, but making their bum sting isn't an injury! I prefer to think of spanking as one element in the parental toolbox for training up our children,<sup>37</sup> and I take the rod in Proverbs as a sort of metonymy for the whole range of negative reinforcements. To say that we can do without spanking is, IMHO, seriously to underestimate the challenge of shaping the character of a child.<sup>38</sup>

So the proverbs about “the rod” refer to children. But those passages occur in the OT, not the NT.

### **Question 4. Is spanking an obsolete part of the Mosaic law-covenant in the Old Testament?**

Some Christians answer yes: *There is a discontinuity between the OT and the NT regarding how parents should discipline their children, and physical discipline is now obsolete. It does not appear anywhere in the NT.*

Response: The proverbs are not part of the Mosaic law-covenant. They are general, timeless truths. Andreas Köstenberger argues,

Heb. 12:5–11 does in fact suggest a continuity between the OT and NT concepts of discipline. Although Hebrews 12 does not specifically mention using the “rod,” its direct reference to Prov. 3:12 warrants this conclusion.<sup>39</sup>

Bruce Waltke similarly asserts,

The New Testament teaching does not abrogate or supersede it [Prov 13:24] and should not be abandoned in the church as unfashionable (cf. Eph. 6:4; Heb. 12:5–11) or explained away as culturally conditioned.<sup>40</sup>

So the proverbs present general, timeless truths. But can a proverb contradict the gospel itself?

**Question 5. Is spanking antithetical to the gospel?**

Some Christians answer yes: *Christ has already atoned for sins, so we shouldn't make our children atone for them again.*

Response: When we discipline our children, we are not making them atone for their sins. As I mentioned earlier under “proposition 1,” there is a difference between punishment and discipline. Civil magistrates *punish* lawbreakers; parents *discipline* their children. There's a difference: punishment satisfies justice, and discipline trains. Sometimes people use the terms “punishment” and “discipline” synonymously, but what is important is to distinguish these two concepts. God disciplines his children, so disciplining your children is not antithetical to the gospel.

You can and should apply the gospel when you physically discipline your children. For example, your words and tone may convey that you hate sin, that sin causes pain, that Jesus never sinned (an amazing concept to little children!), and that Jesus died for sinners like us.<sup>41</sup>

William Farley argues in *Gospel-Powered Parenting*,

[T]hose clear on the gospel practice corporal discipline—appropriate spanking at an appropriate age. . . . In summary, the gospel convinces both parent and child that sin—deep, systemic heart disfigurement—is our child's fundamental problem. For this Jesus died. He also died for the sins that these hearts produce. The cross gives us a window into God's hatred of evil, and what awaits the child not led into saving faith through the loving discipline and instruction of his or her parents. The gospel solution is corporal punishment applied by loving, committed parents. The cross motivates consistent, godly discipline.<sup>42</sup>

So those are five questions some people raise regarding enforcing guidelines. Let's conclude briefly with ten specific applications regarding discipline:

### 3. CONCLUDING APPLICATION

§§1–2 explain texts from Hebrews and Proverbs. This section is not tethered to a text. Here I'm stepping back and offering what I think are wise suggestions:

**Application 1. Pray for your children.**

You cannot change their hearts. Only God can. Discipline can accomplish only so much. It cannot give your children a new heart. So beg God to give your children new hearts.

The goal of disciplining your children is not merely that they externally obey you. It's that God changes their heart so that they love God with their whole being and apply the gospel to every area of their lives. You can't legislate and enforce that. You can't save your children from their sins. But you can pray for them.

**Application 2. Evangelize your children.**

Constantly. In all aspects of life—including when you discipline them. All three levels of discipline can be remarkably teachable moments to discuss why God hates sin, how sin results in terrible consequences in this life and the next, and how Jesus solves the problem of sin.

Some of the most teachable moments will be when you transparently share with your children that you're a sinner, too. When you sin against your children, ask them to forgive you. Communicate that you can't obey without God's help either and that we're all sinful people who need Jesus to save us from our sins.

**Application 3. Use multiple levels of discipline.**

Spend as much of your disciplinary time as possible in levels 1 and 2 (teaching and warning) and as little as possible in level 3 (enforcing). But use all three levels. Wegner explains,

The person who has wisdom will understand the principle of using the proper amount of discipline to curb improper behavior. . . . [E]ven within this level of discipline there are various levels of severity, and the wise parent uses only the level of discipline necessary to curb the incorrect behavior.”<sup>43</sup>

**Application 4. Love your children, and tell them and show them that you love them.**

- Proper discipline is evidence that you love them.
- Never discipline in unrighteous anger. That is not loving.
- “Do not provoke your children to anger” (Eph 6:4 NASB, ESV, NET, NLT). “Do not exasperate your children” (Eph 6:4 NIV). That is not loving.

Your children can do things that will frustrate and anger you, but there should be nothing they can do that will ever make you stop loving them. Make sure they know that.

We frequently read a “storybook Bible” to our children that refers often to God’s “Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love.”<sup>44</sup> We should love our kids the same way.

**Application 5. Beware of two extremes: (a) not disciplining and (b) over-disciplining.**

There are at least two drop-offs on the path of biblical discipline. That is, there are two extremes of disobeying: (1) not disciplining our children at all and (2) over-disciplining them in a harsh, abusive, loveless, authoritarian manner. Both are serious errors, and we shouldn’t gloss over either.<sup>45</sup>

There are a lot of ways to sin, and don’t assume that you’re OK simply because you’re not guilty of a particular sin. You may not be guilty of not disciplining, but do you over-discipline? You may not be guilty of over-disciplining, but do you discipline at all? Ask God for wisdom to shepherd your children with just the right blend of grace and truth.

**Application 6. Fathers, take the lead in discipline.**

Hebrews 12 talks specifically about human *fathers* disciplining their children. Ephesians 6:4 directly addresses *fathers*:

“Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”

Fathers, you are the head of your wife, and you are

responsible for your home. Lovingly lead your wife and family by taking the lead in discipline. Don’t passively sit by while leaving the burden of discipline exclusively or primarily to your wife. Don’t leave the hard stuff to Mom. Support your wife. Your children should know you are a unified team.

**Application 7. Learn how to discipline each of your children most effectively.**

Every child is different, so don’t rigidly, inflexibly, and thoughtlessly apply the exact same methods to all of your children. Ray Ortlund, a former OT professor who is now a preaching pastor, says this in his recent commentary on Proverbs: “It is hard to read the Bible and get the impression that children should never be spanked. You have to figure out how it works best in your home, and some kids need only a stare to melt their hearts.”<sup>46</sup> A stern word and hardly any physical discipline may be sufficient with one child but not with another.

**Application 8. Distinguish between family rules and the Bible.**

It’s important in the discipline process to communicate biblical principles. That’s not hard to do for sins like direct disobedience or lying, but especially as our children grow older, it is important to distinguish between family rules and the Bible.

There is a difference, for example, between “Make your bed in the morning” and “Speak truthfully.” The Bible does not command us to make our bed in the morning; it does command us to speak truthfully and not lie. But if you’re a child and your parents ask you to make your bed in the morning, then the biblical principle is not “I must make my bed in the morning because God says to make my bed in the morning,” but “I must make my bed in the morning because my parents are asking me to make my bed in the morning, and I must obey my parents when what they command does not contradict Scripture.”

If we don’t distinguish family rules from the Bible, then our children may think of all our rules in the same category. That may clutter their conscience with taboos, make it difficult for them to process why other Christian families follow some different rules and why Chris-



tians in other cultures follow some different rules,<sup>47</sup> and tempt them to reject all rules later in life instead of simply adjusting some of the family rules.

**Application 9. Be humble about parental discipline; don't be proud and judgmental.**

You need God's grace, and God gives grace to the humble (Prov 3:34; Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5). It's so easy to be judgmental towards other parents regarding how they train (or don't train) their children:

- Especially before you have children.
- Especially if you have comparatively well-behaved children.
- Especially if your children have not yet reached the same stages as other children (e.g., parents of young children may be tempted to be judgmental towards how other parents train their teens).

Be discerning, but don't be judgmental and self-righteous. Beg God for wisdom—because you need it! You can't produce "good" children on your own. Ask your Father in heaven to help you love your children like he loves you.

**Application 10. Persevere with a long-term view that trusts God's word.**

"Discipline may be the most demanding task of parenthood."<sup>48</sup> Intentionally, consistently, and lovingly disciplining your children is exhausting. "It is much easier to let children have their own way and wander off into sin."<sup>49</sup> You will frequently be tempted to take shortcuts and not teach, reiterate, or enforce guidelines. Don't give up. One pastor observes, "When the parent is qualified to discipline, he probably does not feel like it, and when he feels like it, he is probably not qualified."<sup>50</sup>

Trust God; take him at his word (as we've seen in Hebrews and Proverbs), and fulfill your high calling before God as a father or mother to the children he has graciously given you. If you have a short-term view, then you may choose to operate in a way that is more convenient and pleasant for you, but if you have a long-term view and trust God, then you will forego your personal convenience and pleasure by training your children for their good and for God's glory.

God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. (Heb 12:10b–11).

Father, thank you for loving us. Thank you for loving us by disciplining us. Please give those of us who are parents grace to love our children like you love us. Help us love our children by wisely disciplining them. We beg you to save our children. And we beg you for wisdom to discipline them with just the right blend of grace and truth—for their good and ultimately for your glory.

#### **4. RECOMMENDED RESOURCES**

Baugham, Brad. "Gospel-centered Parenting: Our Greatest Challenge—Discipline." Sermon preached to Emmanuel Bible Church in Mauldin, SC. March 1, 2009. <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=32091922320>.

Farley, William P. *Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2009. See chs. 8–9 (pp. 145–74).

Fitzpatrick, Elyse, and Jessica Thompson. *Give Them Grace: Dazzling Your Kids with the Love of Jesus*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2011. See chs. 5–6 (pp. 81–110).

Grudem, Wayne. *Politics—According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010. See "Discipline of Children and Spanking" (pp. 256–60).

Köstenberger, Andreas J. *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*. 2nd ed. Wheaton: Crossway, 2010. See "Physical Discipline" (pp. 142–46, 341–43).

Schreiner, Thomas R. Review of William J. Webb, *Corporal Punishment in the Bible*. The Gospel Coalition Book Reviews, September 12, 2011. [http://thegospelcoalition.org/book-reviews/review/corporal\\_punishment\\_in\\_the\\_bible](http://thegospelcoalition.org/book-reviews/review/corporal_punishment_in_the_bible).

Wegner, Paul D. "Discipline in the Book of Prov-

erbs: “To Spank or Not to Spank?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48 (2005): 715–32. [http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/48/48-4/JETS\\_48-4\\_715-732.pdf](http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/48/48-4/JETS_48-4_715-732.pdf).

Wegner, Paul D., Catherine Wegner, and Kimberlee Herman. *Wise Parenting: Guidelines from the Book of Proverbs*. Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2009.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> This is a lightly edited manuscript from a sermon preached to Grace Bible Church in Moore, South Carolina on June 3, 2012 as part of a series on parenting. Special thanks to friends who examined a preliminary draft of this sermon and shared helpful (sometimes critical) feedback, especially Jenni Naselli (my wife), Wendy Alsup, Chuck Barrett, Brad Baugham, Doug Becker, Bob Bixby, Denny Burk, Ken Casillas, Brian Collins, Bruce Compton, David Crabb, Jason DeRouchie, Kyle Dunham, Jeremy Farmer, Andrew Franseen, David and Stephanie George, Phil Gons, James Grant, Jim Hamilton, Matthew Hoskinson, Josh and Miriam Hurst, Tim Keese, Tom Keiser, Jack Klem, Aaron Mahl, Bob McCabe, Kerry McGonigal, Mark Minnick, Dan Phillips, Mark Rogers, Larry Rogier, Dwight and Kristen Sands, Owen Strachan, Daniel and Keren Threlfall, Joe Tyrpak, Robert Vincent, Mark Ward, Dan Winnberg, Richard Winston, and Mike Wittmer. Also thanks to friends for sharpening conversations as I was preparing to preach this sermon, especially Jack Collins, Randy Jaeggli, Dan Kim, Jason Meyer, John Piper, and Tom Schreiner.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Andrew David Naselli, “Scripture: How the Bible Is a Book Like No Other,” in *Don’t Call It a Comeback: The Same Faith for a New Day* (ed. Kevin DeYoung; Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 59–69.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from *The Holy Bible: New International Version*®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by International Bible Society, [www.ibs.org](http://www.ibs.org). All rights reserved worldwide.

<sup>4</sup> There’s a sense in which all humans are God’s children. Paul quotes and agrees with a pagan poet that “We [i.e., all humans] are his [God’s] offspring” (Acts 17:28). But that’s not the sense in this passage.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Bauer et al., eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the*

*New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (3rd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Wilson, *Standing on the Promises: A Handbook of Biblical Childrearing* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 1997), 105.

<sup>7</sup> John Piper, “The Painful Discipline of Our Heavenly Father (Hebrews 12:3–11)” (Minneapolis, August 24, 1997), <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/sermons/the-painful-discipline-of-our-heavenly-father>: “The word ‘seems’ (discipline ‘seems’ not to be joyful) hints that there is a kind of residual joy of hope that hangs on beneath the cloud, but the tears and the sighs and the groans are so many that it looks like sorrow has the upper hand—at least for a season. As it does when a child cries after a spanking.”

<sup>8</sup> I preached on Hebrews 12:3–17 on March 3, 2013 to Sovereign Grace Church in Greenville, South Carolina (available at [http://andynaselli.com/wp-content/uploads/20130303\\_Heb\\_12.3-17.mp3](http://andynaselli.com/wp-content/uploads/20130303_Heb_12.3-17.mp3)), and I only briefly mentioned parental discipline because that is not the passage’s primary point.

<sup>9</sup> “Hardship” is not in the original text but the context implies it.

<sup>10</sup> Paul D. Wegner, “Discipline in the Book of Proverbs: ‘To Spank or Not to Spank?’” *JETS* 48 (2005): 715–32 (available at [http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/48/48-4/JETS\\_48-4\\_715-732.pdf](http://www.etsjets.org/files/JETS-PDFs/48/48-4/JETS_48-4_715-732.pdf)); Paul D. Wegner, Catherine Wegner, and Kimberlee Herman, *Wise Parenting: Guidelines from the Book of Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> The table is from Wegner, Wegner, and Herman, *Wise Parenting*, 32.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Timothy Keller, *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith* (New York: Dutton, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> The KJV, NASB, and ESV often translate (tōkachath) as “reproof”; the NIV often translates it as “rebuke” or “correction.” That word occurs 16 times in Proverbs (out of 24 times total in the OT): Prov 1:23, 25, 30; 3:11; 5:12; 6:23; 10:17; 12:1; 13:18; 15:5, 10, 31, 32, 27:5; 29:1, 15).

<sup>14</sup> Wegner, “Discipline in the Book of Proverbs,” 723.

<sup>15</sup> It seems like there are several positions on physical discipline that appear along a spectrum, e.g., (1) It is virtually the only disciplinary tool in the parental toolbox. (2) It is one of several disciplinary tools in

the parental toolbox, and parents should use it wisely. (3) It is a last-resort measure that parents may use but only very, very rarely (e.g., only a handful of times in a child's life). (4) It is not always wrong, but it is unnecessary and unwise (e.g., some parents choose not to spank their own children but do not oppose other parents choosing to do so). (5) It is always wrong because it is a form of child abuse.

<sup>16</sup> E.g., see the recommended resources at <http://parentingfreedom.com/discipline/>. Cf. William Sears and Martha Sears, *The Discipline Book: Everything You Need to Know to Have a Better-Behaved Child—From Birth to Age Ten* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1995); William Sears, “10 Reasons Not to Hit Your Child,” <http://askdrsears.com/topics/discipline-behavior/spanking/10-reasons-not-hit-your-child>; Ross Campbell, *Relational Parenting* (Chicago: Moody, 2000); Clay Clarkson, *Heartfelt Discipline: The Gentle Art of Training and Guiding Your Child* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook, 2003); Anne Sokol, “One Mom’s Look at Tedd Tripp’s Book: *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*” (March 16, 2011), <http://sharperiron.org/article/one-mom%E2%80%99s-look-at-tedd-tripp%E2%80%99s-book-shepherding-child%E2%80%99s-heart>.

<sup>17</sup> The anti-spanking advocates I’ve read are generally poorly equipped to make their arguments. Almost all of them appeal to the meaning of Hebrew words and Hebrew grammar without knowing Hebrew themselves (they are certainly not Hebrew scholars); instead, they appeal to people they think are authorities but who are actually not well-equipped either. They are not formally trained in linguistics, hermeneutics, or theology. That doesn’t necessarily mean that they’re wrong, but it does explain why they commit so many exegetical fallacies and why commentaries by OT scholars (at least all of the ones I’ve consulted) do not support their arguments. Some may object to this as “seminary snobbery” that goes against “the priesthood of the believer.” However:

(a) The priesthood of the believer does not mean that people with little or no understanding of Hebrew or Greek can make exegetical arguments about Hebrew or Greek that carry the same weight as people who

are experts in Hebrew or Greek. Chuck Barrett, a seminary professor of historical theology, explains, “Another component of the priesthood of all believers from a historical-theology perspective is that the Reformers never intended this idea to provide all individuals freedom to interpret Scripture however they wanted. There were hermeneutical rules that guided interpretation even in the sixteenth century when this concept was articulated in a more developed manner. And the application of the concept was not limited to interpreting Scripture, but focused on a person’s ability to approach God through Christ without the need/aid of a priest. But back to the interpretation part: priesthood of all believers was never intended to be a shield to hide behind when one wants to make the Bible say something it actually does not say. Nor was it ever intended historically to undermine an educated ministry” (email on May 19, 2012, quoted with permission).

(b) I’m pretty familiar with NT Greek (cf. the intro to <http://andynaselli.com/bible-translation>), but I’m not a Greek scholar. If a view I hold contradicts the nearly unanimous view of Greek scholars, it will cause me to carefully rethink whether I properly understand that view.

(c) When I teach first-year Greek courses, I tell students that they are far more dangerous now than they ever were before they knew a little bit of Greek. The analogy I use is that they’re like a toddler with a chainsaw (especially when they use programs like BibleWorks or Logos). Sometimes it takes years and years of familiarity with a language to be able to use it responsibly. It’s irresponsible when people make really strong arguments about what the Hebrew or Greek means when they couldn’t read a Hebrew or Greek text if you put it in front of them.

(d) I am not a Hebrew expert. I took only five semesters of Hebrew in graduate school and a half-dozen OT exegesis and theology courses that built on that foundation. My primary field is NT, not OT. So in addition to consulting about thirty commentaries on Proverbs (none of which argue against physical discipline), I sent a draft of this sermon to over a dozen OT experts—men who have PhDs in OT and who teach the OT full-time as professors on the graduate level.



I'm grateful that their feedback was sharpening and affirming: all of them agree with my exegesis. I don't think that appealing to experts like this is "snobbery" but a mark of wisdom and humility.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., John K. Rosemond, *Parenting by the Book: Biblical Wisdom for Raising Your Child* (New York: Howard, 2007), 199–23.

<sup>19</sup> "The rod" is probably just a generic use of the article.

<sup>20</sup> For more on this lexical fallacy, see D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 52–53, 60–61; Craig L. Blomberg, *A Handbook of New Testament Exegesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 139–40; Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (2nd ed.; Downers Grove: IVP, 2006), 84, 105, 110, 407; Moisés Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 25–27, 61, 206.

<sup>21</sup> William J. Webb, *Corporal Punishment in the Bible: A Redemptive-Movement Hermeneutic for Troubling Texts* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2011), 44–45. For an example of the view that Webb rejects here, see argument 6 in William Sears, "10 Reasons Not to Hit Your Child," <http://askdrsears.com/topics/discipline-behavior/spanking/10-reasons-not-hit-your-child>.

<sup>22</sup> See Thomas R. Schreiner, "Review of William J. Webb, *Corporal Punishment in the Bible*," *The Gospel Coalition Book Reviews*, September 12, 2011, [http://thegospelcoalition.org/book-reviews/review/corporal\\_punishment\\_in\\_the\\_bible](http://thegospelcoalition.org/book-reviews/review/corporal_punishment_in_the_bible). Cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, "William J. Webb's *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: A Review Article*," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6, no. 1 (2002): 46–65; Wayne Grudem, "Review Article: Should We Move Beyond the New Testament to a Better Ethic? An Analysis of William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*," *JETS* 47 (2004): 299–346; Gary T. Meadors, ed., *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology* (Counterpoints; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

<sup>23</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Politics—According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture* (Grand Rapids:

Zondervan, 2010), 257.

<sup>24</sup> Wegner, "Discipline in the Book of Proverbs," 725.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Dan Phillips, *God's Wisdom in Proverbs* (Woodlands, TX: Kress, 2011), 274: "We should see 'the rod' is emblematic. That is: the rod is a literal object representing a metaphorical reality, larger than (but including) itself. It is similar to 'the sword' in Romans 13:4, which denotes government's legitimate punitive power, not limited to but leading up to and including the death penalty. The rod represents the parent's God-given authority to enforce house law, not limited to corporal punishment, but including it and everything leading up to it. Standing in a corner is a legitimate use of the rod; writing sentences or doing chores is a legitimate use of the rod; a spanking is a legitimate use of the rod."

<sup>26</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1–15* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 574.

<sup>27</sup> Wilson, *Standing on the Promises*, 41; cf. 76–77.

<sup>28</sup> E.g., my extraordinary sister-in-law!

<sup>29</sup> D. A. Carson, "Growing up a 'PK,'" *CBC Report*, March 1984, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15–31* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 252.

<sup>31</sup> Wegner, Wegner, and Herman, *Wise Parenting*, 93.

<sup>32</sup> The South Carolina Code of Laws from the South Carolina Legislative Council distinguishes between "child abuse" and "corporal punishment or physical discipline": (4) "Child abuse or neglect" or "harm" occurs when the parent, guardian, or other person responsible for the child's welfare:

- (a) inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the child physical or mental injury or engages in acts or omissions which present a substantial risk of physical or mental injury to the child, including injuries sustained as a result of excessive corporal punishment, but excluding corporal punishment or physical discipline which:
  - (i) is administered by a parent or person in loco parentis;
  - (ii) is perpetrated for the sole purpose of restraining or correcting the child;
  - (iii) is reasonable in manner and moderate in degree;
  - (iv) has not brought about permanent or lasting damage

to the child; and

(v) is not reckless or grossly negligent behavior by the parents. “South Carolina Code of Laws: Unannotated; Current through the end of the 2011 Session,” <http://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t63c007.php> (accessed May 10, 2012).

<sup>33</sup> See John Piper, “Would Jesus Spank a Child?” *Desiring God* (February 16, 2009). Text and audio: <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/ask-pastor-john/would-jesus-spank-a-child>. Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S6Z52mOrW8U>.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 50–58; Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 225–42.

<sup>35</sup> I know of two Hebrew professors who support this argument: Ted Hildebrandt, “Proverbs 22:6a: Train up a Child?,” *Grace Theological Journal* 9 (1988): 3–19; and Randy Jaeggli, “Interpreting Proverbs 22:6,” *Biblical Viewpoint* 32, no. 2 (November 1999): 41–48. Jaeggli follows Hildebrandt. Waltke footnotes Hildebrandt’s article and asserts, “the data does not confirm his unique views” (*Proverbs 15–31*, 203n59). Phillips also takes issue with Hildebrandt (*Proverbs*, 369; cf. 49–50). Neither Hildebrandt nor Jaeggli, however, argue in their articles that parents should not physically discipline children. To the contrary Jaeggli, now a grandfather, argues that the principle of physical discipline still applies, and he recommends that, when necessary, parents wisely and lovingly spank their children in a way that stings but causes no injury (personal conversation on June 2, 2012, shared with permission).

<sup>36</sup> C. John Collins is Professor of Old Testament at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis. He served as Chair of the ESV’s OT Translation Committee and as the OT Editor for the *ESV Study Bible*.

<sup>37</sup> This is a very good analogy. Physical discipline is just one of many “tools” in “the parental toolbox.” It’s an important tool, sometimes a necessary tool. But it’s not the only tool. When your only tool is a hammer, you begin to see the world as a nail.

<sup>38</sup> Email on March 26, 2012, quoted with permission.

<sup>39</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (2nd ed.; Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 342n28.

<sup>40</sup> Waltke, *Proverbs 1–15*, 574.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jessica Thompson, *Give Them Grace: Dazzling Your Kids with the Love of Jesus* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 101.

<sup>42</sup> William P. Farley, *Gospel-Powered Parenting: How the Gospel Shapes and Transforms Parenting* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2009), 154.

<sup>43</sup> Wegner, “Discipline in the Book of Proverbs,” 720, 723.

<sup>44</sup> Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible: Every Story Whispers His Name* (Grand Rapids: Zonderkidz, 2007).

<sup>45</sup> Similarly, when we talk about the role of husbands and wives, we may err by focusing exclusively on how the wife must submit to her husband without warning husbands against the sin of authoritarianism.

<sup>46</sup> Raymond C. Ortlund Jr., *Proverbs: Wisdom That Works* (Preaching the Word; Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 155. Cf. Wilson, *Standing on the Promises*, 105–6: “Because children are very different, this means that there will be godly distinctions in the discipline received by various children. To say it again, kids are different—their personalities differ, their attitudes toward pain differ, and of course, they differ in sex. Consequently, if parents are seeking to accomplish a particular end through discipline, the amount of discipline required will vary as the nature of the child varies. Many parents know what it is like to spank a tough little tank of a boy, who always tries to make it as far through a spanking as he can without crying. They also know what it is like to see their other child dissolve into tears if the displeased parent looks at her sideways.”

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Robert J. Priest, “Missionary Elenctics: Conscience and Culture,” *Missiology: An International Review* 22, no. 3 (1994): 291–315.

<sup>48</sup> Kaye V. Cook, “Child Discipline,” *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling* (ed. David G. Benner and Peter C. Hill; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 183.

<sup>49</sup> Wegner, “Discipline in the Book of Proverbs,” 725.

<sup>50</sup> Wilson, *Standing on the Promises*, 110; cf. 133, 141–4.