

GOOD



The Joy of Christian
Manhood and Womanhood

EDITORS

Jonathan Parnell & Owen Strachan

FOREWORD BY JOHN PIPER

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FOREWORD

I asked to write this foreword. I had hoped to endorse this book and help spread the word through Twitter. But then I took a PDF on the plane to Brazil and could not put it down. So I told Marshall Segal, one of the authors, who told the editors: *If you'll take me, I'd like to write the foreword.*

The reason for my eagerness is partly nostalgia, partly thankfulness, partly amazement, partly admiration, and partly hope.

The editors and most of the authors of this book were not yet teenagers when Wayne Grudem and I were editing “the big blue book” called *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* from 1988 to 1991. So to see this project emerge 25 years later with a shared and refined vision is like seeing our baby graduate from college. But of course, my nostalgia is no reason for you to read the book. So let's turn to what matters more.

Rising in me, as I read, was a high sense of thankfulness to God for the insight, wisdom, giftedness, biblical

faithfulness, and courage of these younger authors. The vision of manhood and womanhood they are trumpeting is biblical, beautiful, and sadly obnoxious to many in society. That is, it fits with faith in Christ and infuriates those who love the atmosphere of self-actualizing autonomy—what editor Owen Strachan calls *Narcissistic Optimistic Deism*. So I am thankful for the valor of these men and women who are willing to swim against unbiblical currents.

My amazement is that decades into this struggle, there is such a widespread and robust embrace of the beautiful biblical vision of complementary manhood and womanhood. This may strike you as an evidence of small faith on my part. Perhaps it is. But if you had tasted the vitriol of our audiences in 1970s and 1980s, you might understand.

In the late seventies, we were called “obscene” for suggesting that God’s word taught distinct, complementary roles for men and women based on manhood and womanhood, not just competency. Therefore, the breadth and maturity and creativity and joyfulness of the complementarian crowd today triggers happy amazement in me.

Then, when I turned to these actual chapters, I read in admiration. These folks are not only good thinkers and faithful interpreters of the Bible; they are also gifted writers. The reading was not just informative and inspiring; it was a pleasure. I love to think of what these men and women will be writing in thirty years. If it’s this good now, what will it be then?

Finally, I come away with hope. I am pushing to the end of my seventh decade. So I think a lot these days about what is in place for the advance of God’s saving purposes

on the earth in the decades to come. Reading these voices gives me hope that God is wonderfully at work to exalt his great name long after I am gone.

I commend this book to you, and pray that the beauty of the vision, and the courage to speak it, will spread—for the supremacy of God in all things for the joy of all peoples through Jesus Christ.

John Piper
Founder and Teacher
desiringGod.org

Chapter 8

DISCIPLINE FOR OUR GOOD

Andy Naselli

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. 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. It's important to be aware of how your experience shapes how you view parental discipline. But the most important question to ask is this: What does God's word teach about parental discipline?¹²

Seven Facts about Discipline from Hebrews 12:4–11

Let's begin by looking at a foundational passage related to parental discipline in the New Testament: Hebrews

12:4–11. The context is that the author is addressing Christians who are suffering. Note the repetition of the word “discipline.” The word occurs at least once in every verse except the first one:

In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 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, because the Lord *disciplines* the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.”
(Proverbs 3:11–12)

Endure hardship as *discipline*; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not *disciplined* by their father? If you are not *disciplined*—and everyone undergoes *discipline*—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. 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! 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. 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*. (Hebrews 12:4–11 NIV, emphasis added)

This passage teaches at least seven facts about discipline:

1. *God* disciplines his children (vv. 5–7, 10).

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

2. God disciplines *all* his children (vv. 6, 8).

Because discipline is a distinguishing factor between those who are God's children and those who are not, discipline is not one option among others for believers; it's ubiquitous. God disciplines his children, and if you are God's child, he will discipline you.

3. God disciplines *only* his children (vv. 6–8).

God's discipline demonstrates that he loves you and 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.

4. Discipline is training: God disciplines his children for their good (vv. 10–11).

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.

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 disciplining them. In hanging a murderer, the civil magistrate is not disciplining—he is punishing.”¹³

5. Discipline seems unpleasant and painful (v. 11).

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

6. God's children should endure God's discipline
(vv. 5, 7, 9).

This is the burden of the passage in context. 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).

7. God's disciplining his children compares to
human parents' disciplining their children
(vv. 5, 7–10).

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.

So 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.

Three Levels of Parental Discipline in the Book of Proverbs

I'm borrowing in this section from Paul Wegner, who memorably systematizes what the book of Proverbs teaches about parental discipline.¹⁴ He argues that there are four levels of discipline in the Book of Proverbs: three levels for parents and one for government:¹⁵

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

PRINCIPLES OF DISCIPLINE	BIBLICAL REFERENCES
Level 1: Teaching the Guidelines	
Principle 1: 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
Principle 2: 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
Principle 3: 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; 16:18, 26; 17:20; 18:13; 23:10-12; 24:17-20
Level 2: Reiterating the Guidelines	
Principles: 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; 31:2-9
Level 3: Enforcing the Guidelines	
Principle 1: 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
Principle 2: A Reprimand with Non- Abusive Corporal Punishment	Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 23:13-14; 29:15
BEYOND A PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITY	
Level 4: Government's Role in Discipline	
Principle: 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).]	

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

Parents must clearly explain to their children what they expect from them (cf. Proverbs 1:8–9). This takes so many forms, and it happens in every venue of life as parents spend time with their children (cf. Deuteronomy 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 (Proverbs 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 (Proverbs 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.¹⁶ 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, revoking privileges, and sometimes physical discipline (e.g., "spanking"). The main idea in Proverbs (especially in four passages that mention "the rod")¹⁷ is "that temporary punishment is better than allowing wickedness or evil to run wild and lead to more serious punishment."¹⁸

Ten Concluding Applications

Let's conclude with ten wise suggestions:¹⁹

1. Pray for your children
2. Evangelize your children
3. Use multiple levels of discipline

4. Love your children, and tell them and show them that you love them
5. Beware of two extremes: (a) not disciplining and (b) over-disciplining
6. Fathers, take the lead in discipline
7. Learn how to discipline each of your children most effectively
8. Distinguish between family rules and the Bible
9. Be humble about parental discipline; don't be proud and judgmental
10. Persevere with a long-term view that trusts God's word

NOTES

- 12 This condenses Andrew David Naselli, “Discipline: Training Our Children for Their Good,” *Journal of Discipleship and Family Ministry* 3:2 (2013): 48–64, available at <http://andynaselli.com/how-should-parents-discipline-their-children-is-spanking-wrong>. That article is over five times longer than this one.
- 13 Douglas Wilson, *Standing on the Promises: A Handbook of Biblical Childrearing* (Moscow, ID: Canon, 1997), 105.
- 14 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; Wegner, Paul D., Wegner, Catherine and Herman, Kimberlee, *Wise Parenting: Guidelines from the Book of Proverbs* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 2009).
- 15 The table is from Wegner, Wegner, and Herman, *Wise Parenting*, 32.
- 16 Cf. Timothy Keller, *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith* (New York: Dutton, 2008).
- 17 Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, 23:13–14, 29:15.
- 18 Wegner, “Discipline in the Book of Proverbs,” 723.

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. Prominent books and blogs that argue against spanking raise at least five questions: (1) Does “the rod” represent discipline but exclude *physical* discipline? (2) Is spanking a form of physical and psychological child abuse? (3) Do the proverbs about using the rod refer to young men rather than children? (4) Is spanking an obsolete part of the Mosaic law-covenant in the Old Testament? (5) Is spanking antithetical to the gospel? For answers to these questions, see Naselli, “Discipline: Training Our Children for Their Good,” 54–58, <http://andynaselli.com/how-should-parents-discipline-their-children-is-spanking-wrong>.

- 19 For brief explanations of each of these applications, see Naselli, “Discipline: Training Our Children for Their Good,” 58–60, <http://andynaselli.com/how-should-parents-discipline-their-children-is-spanking-wrong>.