

Raising Children to Obey God

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A world without discipline is a world without consequences, which in turn becomes a world without order, which in turn becomes a world of anarchy and destruction. If you are of the opinion that godly discipline and consequences are sorely needed, then the question we must pose is where and when discipline should begin. Should it start in the workplace or at school? Or should it start in the home?

Discipline from a God-fearing and God-loving parent will produce a child that is more obedient to God.

Godly Discipline Shows Love

We have had several conversations with adults who have told us how unloved they felt by their parents because their parents left them to their own devices whilst in their teenage years.

They felt that their parents did not love them enough to discipline them, even though the discipline would only have entailed a good talking to mixed with a thorough reality shake. They felt that if their parents would only have done that, they would not have made many of the wrong choices which they later went on to make. Scripture tends to agree with this assessment:

'And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child. As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Whoever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? If God doesn't discipline you as he does all his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all. Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?' (Hebrews 12:5-9, NLT)

It is clear from Scripture that a significant aspect of love is discipline

The Virtues of Discipline

As a loving parent, when you discipline your child for misbehaviour, they may not appreciate the discipline at the time, even though you affirm them that you are carrying out the discipline because you love them and that it is for their own good. Your child has basically got one of two options: either they reject your discipline or accept it. If they accept your discipline and adapt their behaviour, they have unknowingly learned and discovered many invaluable lessons.

- They have learned how to stop the misbehaviour; how to stop themselves whilst on a path of ruin.
- They have learned how to take stock of themselves and others and the situations that they find themselves in.
- They are learning to process trauma and shock and how to self-start again after a confrontation.
- They have learned how to pick themselves up off the ground, to self-soothe and to buck up.
- They have learned to not let the setbacks of life rob them of future opportunities, outcomes and breakthroughs.

An Invaluable Lesson

A friend of mine has an 18-year-old son. The son misbehaved grossly in direct disobedience to a verbal commitment he had made to be obedient regarding a specific matter. The consequences of this misbehaviour were that the young man forfeited his cell phone for a month and his allowance money for three months and would not get the car he was going to get for university. Bear in mind that the disobedience was severe and warranted this discipline. The father also realised that his son was emotionally unstable and very influenced by his misbehaving peers who were also going to university.

The father then set up a written contract with his son, that in the event that he failed any subject, he would have to refund his father the fee for that specific subject. In the event that the son went longer than the allotted three-year degree period, he would have to refund all tuition and living expenses paid up to then and would have to take out a loan for the additional year needed to complete his degree.

The Victory

This might seem harsh to some of you, but the young man learned invaluable lessons, including respect for authority and consequences for one's actions. The son ended up finishing his degree in three years with two distinctions. In his last year, he had to complete and juggle 10 subjects as a result of his lack of discipline in his first year. The father then waived the extra payments his son had to make for the subjects he failed in his first year. The young man now has a healthy, loving and endearing relationship with both his parents and has learned many of the lessons mentioned above.

Best Learned at Home

These values and lessons need to be learned at home and can even start being learned from as young as pre-toddler age. It is clear from Scripture that a significant aspect of love is discipline and that a parent's discipline should represent God's discipline. Discipline from a God-fearing and God-loving parent will produce a child that is more obedient to God.