

# Week 8: Training Up Your Children Part 3 - Disciplining Our Children

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## WEEK 8: DAY 1

### Introduction to Discipline

As we went through our study on *Training Up Your Children Part 1*, I had a very good reason for covering the topic of discipleship before discipline. Truly, discipleship is *foundational* to living the Christian life; everything is built upon discipleship. Jesus told His followers to, “*go make disciples of all nations*” (Matt. 28:19). We have learned that this mandate applies to ministry in our homes; as parents it is our responsibility to disciple our children. To do this, we need to be disciples of Christ ourselves, through personal Bible study and obedient living. The result is an abiding relationship with Christ, which enables us to properly tend to our families. I wanted to restate this because parents often put more importance on discipline than discipleship: “let’s get to the discipline!” But discipleship is vital: Jesus to parent, and parent to child. Remember, our relationship with Christ *transforms* us, so that we can bring *glory* to His name.

During the next few weeks, I want to help you understand biblical discipline, what it is and is not. Without realizing it, much of what many parents are doing is counter-productive and will *not* bring their children to maturity. God has given us all the information we need for success; He has a plan and a design for parents to follow.

Permit me to offer an illustration that will give you some perspective on discipline. A nine-year-old boy was walking home from school one day and found a cocoon hanging from a branch. He had seen a video on how a butterfly emerges from a cocoon, so he broke the branch off, brought it home, and put it in a jar with holes in the lid. Every day, he would come home from school and stare at the cocoon—hoping he would be able to see this miracle take place.

One day there was a small tear in the cocoon, and the butterfly was trying to wiggle out. So he sat for several hours, watching, but a nine-year-old boy has a limited attention span. Finally, he could not stand it anymore. He opened the jar, pulled out the cocoon, and began to carefully cut along the tear with a small pair of scissors. Once the cocoon was open, he pulled out the butterfly, but it looked very funny. The body was fat and the wings were shriveled. It was so heavy, it could not even hold up its own weight.

He continued to watch, believing that he would see this strange-looking thing turn into a beautiful butterfly. He even picked it up, tried to help, but it would do nothing. Eventually, it died right before his eyes.

That butterfly died because God’s perfect process - the struggle, the strain, and the difficulty of emerging from the cocoon - forces the fluid out of the body into the wings. Then, when it gets out into the atmosphere, the air touches its wings and dries them out, so it can then fly. By removing the struggle that God had designed, the boy killed the butterfly.

**DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY**

Read the following verse and write in your own words what it is saying.

**Hebrews 12:11** *“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”*

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By failing to *discipline* children as God has designed and commanded, many parents are actually preventing them from growing to maturity. When you do not follow through with appropriate discipline, you do not instill the character traits that God wants your kids to have. We have learned that children do not naturally grow into mature adults, but must be trained according to God’s word and plan. If this is not done, many will suffer the result. Lack of training can lead to many types of failures in life; surprisingly, prisons are not only filled with “bad” people, but with many average individuals who never received the proper training to develop mature character.

**DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY**

Read the following verses, list the process and result of good discipline, and/or poor discipline. What is the parental responsibility in each?

**Proverbs 29:15**, *“The rod (authority) and rebuke (training) give wisdom, But a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.”*

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**Proverbs 13:24**, *“He who spares his rod (authority) hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.”*

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**Proverbs 19:18**, *“Chasten your son while there is hope, And do not set your heart on his destruction.”*

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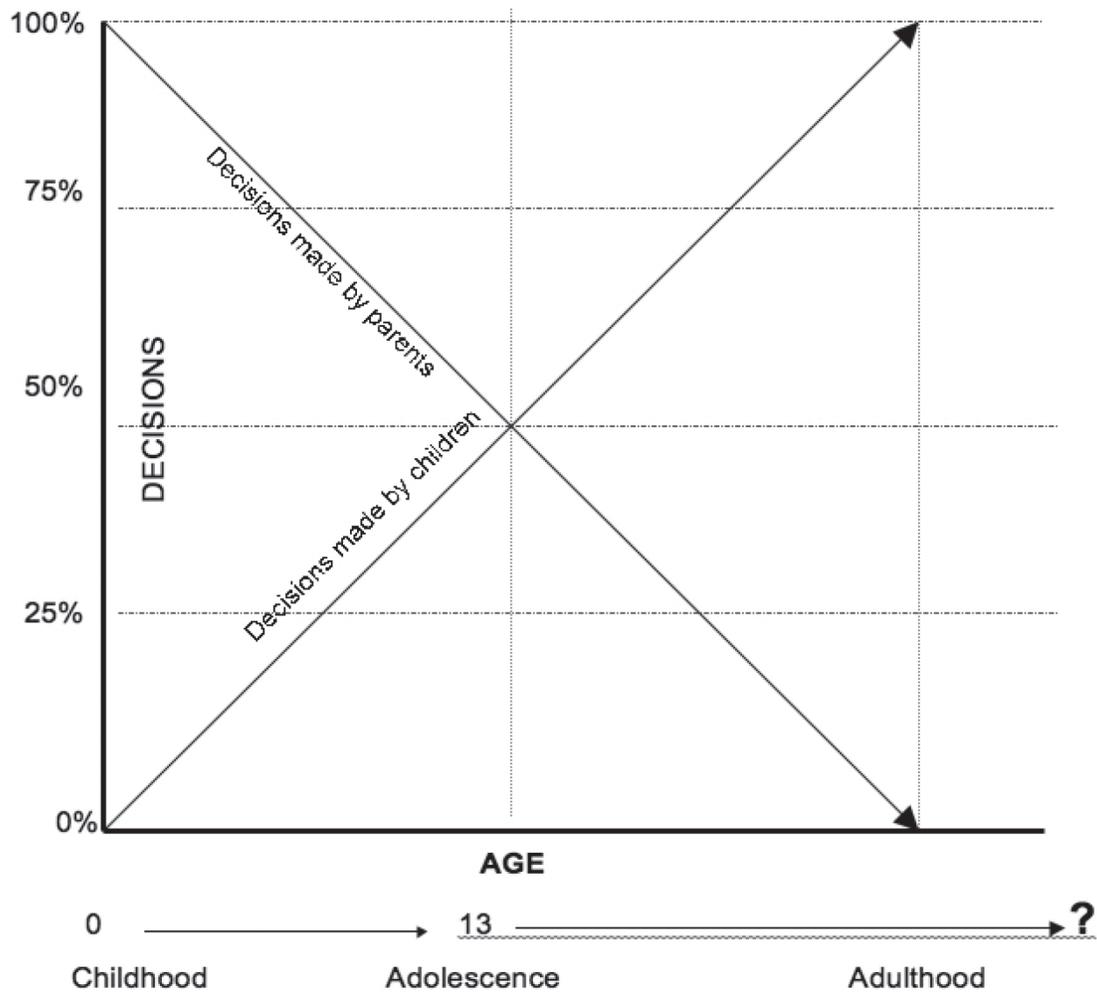
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Training up our children is something God has called us to do (Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4). It is not often fun, and often quite difficult. Just as butterflies must struggle out of their cocoons, our kids do not enjoy the struggle of being disciplined into God’s proper design for maturity (Hebrew 12:11, above). But we parents must follow through!

The wise King Solomon, knowing our natural tendency to despise discipline, encourages his son to think otherwise, considering the good reason that fathers correct their children.

**Proverbs 3:11–12**, *“My son, do not despise the chastening (discipline NAS) of the LORD, nor detest His correction\*; for whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.” \*(equals training)*

**If we have no clear goal, or vision, for discipline and training a child to maturity, then it will NOT happen.**

**OUR GOAL GRAPH IN PARENTING**

At the bottom of the graph, we have the age of our children, from birth to adulthood. On the left side is the number of decisions made by the children versus the number of decisions we, as their parents, make for them. In the beginning, all decisions are made by parents, which is logical. When our kids come home from the hospital, they are obviously not yet capable of choosing for themselves. But at some point on the graph, those lines cross and continue until our children are making all of their own decisions.

In other words, as our children get older, the goal is for them to make healthy, responsible, wise decisions without supervision. Now, you can look at this graph and think, “Of course, that is just common sense.” But, if you do not have a plan in place, a method of training and instilling mature character, this will not happen. You must have a plan. I have met many young adults who do not know how to make wise decisions for themselves. We must move them into maturity by issuing proper discipline. Home is the primary training ground where children grow into adulthood. Or at least, it should be. Do not let your children be molded by outsiders into ideas and practices that are not under your guidance and authority.

## Training Versus Controlling = Growth Versus No Growth

At this point, it is important to note that God has instructed us to *train up* our children, not *control* them. The difference between the two is mainly a mindset of how we perceive our job as parents.

### FACT FILE

**Controlling** – To exercise power over, to dominate or rule, to restrain, a restraining force.<sup>1</sup>

Controlling parents are dictators, not trainers. A symptom of this is the inability to accept failure. From the controller’s perspective, failure in a child is bad, wrong, and a direct threat to parental authority. They are motivated by self-fulfillment, not God’s will. They take their children’s failures personally, as deliberate, as if they were purposely trying to hurt them. These types of parents are often concerned about what others think, not about what is right.

Have you been told by your spouse that you are controlling? Have you been told that you are legalistic, or have *unrealistic* expectations for your kids? Many times this behavior is a result of how you were raised; perhaps never feeling you lived up to your parents’ expectations.



### SELF-EXAMINATION

You may have control issues! Take time to pray and examine your response to failure in your children. Deeply consider what has been stated above. Write out what God shows you.

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If you are harsh and/or controlling, you must ask God, “Why do I perceive my kids’ failures this way? Why am I *reacting* in this way? Is it because I have not forgiven my own parents?” Is it because you are letting your own carnal nature and selfish expectations govern your parenting instead of God’s heart? It is essential that you deal with this issue.

Parents, our job is to *train*; it is part of our ministry. To do this properly, we need to understand “what is” childish behavior. A child can be foolish, disobedient, or defiant. A child’s failure, even willful disobedience,

<sup>1</sup> Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English Language; Second Edition Unabridged; G & C Merriam Company, Publishers, Springfield, MA 1944

is *not* the same as defiant rebellion. If you believe it is, you will respond to your children in the wrong way, usually in anger.

### FACT FILE

**Defiance** – is when a child rebels against the *discipline that follows* their foolish act of immaturity.

Understanding the difference between defiance and foolishness is crucial, as is your ability to adjust your response appropriately. And remember to handle all discipline with love, or your negative communication can actually make your child feel unloved.

Let's look at ourselves for a moment. We parents have studied the biblical principles of loving communication found in 1 Corinthians 13. And have we not all failed at some time to follow God's instructions? This is not because we defiantly said, "I don't care what the Bible says. I am going to do it my way!" Rather, it is because we lack the spiritual maturity and character to carry it out. However, I bet you have noticed some progress, and should realize that you are simply going through God's *training* process.

So, it is important to see that failure is not defiance. Even if your kids have been repeatedly told what not to do, their failures and mistakes are usually due to *immaturity*, foolishness. God clearly explains that children are foolish and that we parents are here to train them in Godly wisdom.

**Proverbs 22:15** "*Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child*".

The word "foolishness" means: "deficient in understanding, unwise, brainless, irrational, ludicrous, a lack of judgment."<sup>2</sup> Does that not perfectly describe our children? They are lacking character and maturity. So why do we get so angry when they act foolishly? God's Word declares they are born that way!

Proverbs 22:6, gives an exhortation to parents that "*the rod of correction will drive it (foolishness) far from him.*" Discipline is viewed here as *positive*, as it will drive the foolishness out of a child. The rod represents parental authority and discipline. In essence, we are training them by using biblical discipline, not control. Note Christian author, H.A. Ironside says:

To leave a child to itself is to ensure its ruin, for folly is bound up in its heart. Discipline, properly administered will correct the natural tendency to go astray. The rod is, of course, not necessarily strictly such. Corporal punishment is not always required, and might at times be

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<sup>2</sup> Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language; Second Edition Unabridged; G & C Merriam Company, Publishers, Springfield, MA 1944

very unwise. But firm, yet kindly, discipline is what the passage declares the importance of. The rod, throughout Scripture, speaks of authority and power; in this case that parental restraint to which the child owes so much. It was the lack of this that was responsible in large measure for the evil ways of both Absalom and Adonijah (2 Sam. 14; 1 Kings 1:6).<sup>3</sup>

## SELF-EXAMINATION

I would like you to take some time right now and read through the following paragraph and write out any of the characteristics of immaturity (foolishness) that you see in your children.

Proverbs gives us a picture of a child's lack of maturity and their need for training. They lack judgment (10:21), enjoy foolishness (10:23), gullible (14:15), avoid the wise (15:12), are proud and haughty (21:24), despise good advice (23:9), make truth useless (26:7), repeat their folly (26:11), trust in themselves (28:26), vent their anger (29:11), cause strife and quarrels (22:10), stir up anger (29:8), go their own way (15:21), lash out when they are discovered in folly (17:12), endangered by their words (18:6, 7), walk a troublesome path (22:5), must be guided by hardship at times (26:3), persist in foolishness (27:22) propensity for laziness (22:13), lustful (22:14) and greedy (22:16).

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## *Training Means . . .*

### **FACT FILE**

**Training** – To cause to grow as desired; to make or become prepared or skilled.<sup>4</sup>

The proper trainer's goal is to fulfill God's will, not our own desires or expectations. Jesus carried out the Father's will (John 5:20, 30; 6:38) by training His disciples, and we are to do the same. Jesus' motivation was to glorify the Father (John 12:28), as we also should when training our children. If this is our motivation, then we will be able to carry out God's purposes in parenting with love and patience (especially with strong-willed children).

<sup>3</sup> H. A. Ironside, *Notes on the Book of Proverbs* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Bros, 1908), 309.

<sup>4</sup> *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language; Second Edition Unabridged*; G & C Merriam Company, Publishers, Springfield, MA 1944

Let me give you an illustration. If you had a two-year-old tree in your backyard with a trunk about three inches in diameter that had a forty-five degree bend on it, wouldn't it be foolish for you to grab the tree and forcibly straighten it up in one try? What would happen to that tree? It would snap at the base, and you would destroy it.

A trainer, like a farmer (which means husbandman<sup>5</sup>), knows that when he finds a bent trunk, there is a proper way and an improper way to fix it. The proper way would be to train the tree by putting a light amount of consistent pressure in a pre-determined direction. As the tree conforms to the pressure, more can be gradually applied in the same direction until the tree is in a desired position, and no longer "bent". This is an example of proper training and perspective.

That is the way we need to perceive our kids; they come to us bent. Have you not noticed? We do not like them bent; we want them straight right now! Because they are "bent", acting their age, we say things like, "Don't act that way!" and send the wrong message to them.

God gives us the biblical instruction so we understand our job and what our mindset toward training should be. We can see that failure and foolishness in our children is to be *expected*, and is normal, merely a part of the whole journey.

**Ephesians 6:4** *"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."*

As previously discussed, the word translated "*bring them up*," means to "bring up to maturity, to train or educate". This must be the goal for our kids in the area of discipline: to raise them to maturity.

The word "training" here means discipline, chastening, correction, and educative discipline, i.e., "discipline that regulates character."<sup>6</sup> Remember, we are instilling character in our children's lives. Proper training or discipline is the *means* by which we carry out the goal.

***"To bring up" is the goal; "training" is the method by which we reach that goal.***

The last part of this verse, "*admonition of the Lord*," means "instructions, warning, exhortation, any words of encouragement or reproof that leads to correct behavior,"<sup>7</sup> as unto the Lord, or as the Lord instructs us to. The exhortation is to train our children His way, not our own way/

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5 Webster's New International Dictionary 1994.

6 W.E. Vine and F.F. Bruce, vol. 2, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Old Tappan NJ: Revell, 1981), 183.

7 Zodhiates, 1017.

***Instilling character is like training muscles.***

Think of it this way: imagine you are a coach, your children are the members of your team, and the goal is to get them bench-pressing two hundred pounds. So, when your students show up on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, your job is to train them to bench two hundred pounds. If they arrived ten minutes late the first day, and you spent half of your time *lecturing* them, what did you do toward training their muscles? What if you yelled and screamed and threatened to take away everything they had? Still nothing.

Until you lay them on the bench, doing bench presses with lighter weights, there will be no training-taking place. Discipline means training them, and every time they fail it is our opportunity to train them. How do they give us opportunities to train them? By their foolish choices and acts; we need to have a biblical perspective toward our children's foolish behavior, view it as our *opportunity* to discipline and train them to maturity. Not to get angry or frustrated.

Let me give you another illustration. If you laid two hundred pounds on your 10 year old child's chest, would you yell, "Pick it up, what's wrong with you? Come on, you should be able to do this?" Of course not! You know that a ten-year-old cannot bench press two hundred pounds! We need to view their failures or foolishness as a sign that training is not yet complete. If we become angry and aggravated, we are sending the message that we expect a child to accomplish the impossible. We also communicate that they are not valuable to us, we don't like them, and/or something is wrong with them. How do you think those types of hurtful expressions will affect your relationship with your child? And if things are not handled properly at a young age, it only gets worse.

We know that training begins with lighter weights; gradually increasing as the person demonstrates the capacity to lift more, until eventually they achieve the goal. In a similar way, a child's *character* grows slightly with each correction. When we parents shout, and act disappointed and upset, it is because of our own ignorance and sin nature. A child's failure merely *proves* to you that they cannot bench-press two hundred pounds at that moment. They do not have the character yet. Do you see the difference?

God wants us to have His viewpoint; it changes our concepts, methods, and our attitude about discipline. This can eliminate anger and the perception that a child's failure is unacceptable, or rebellion. *Foolishness* is bound up in the hearts of our children. Praise the Lord for telling us this truth, and showing us that our task is to instill mature character.

 **SELF-EXAMINATION**

What has your attitude been when your children break a rule or disobey?

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What is the attitude God wants you to have when your child disobeys?

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Write out a prayer asking God to help you change your perspective to His.

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## WEEK 8: DAY 2

### Mature Character

Of course, in order to instill mature character in our children, we must first formulate a definition of maturity. What is our goal? Most parents that I talk to do not truly understand the nature of a mature adult.



#### SELF-EXAMINATION

Take a moment right now and write out what you believe is the character of a mature adult.

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If married, did your spouse write the same description you did?  Yes  No

Can we agree that the ultimate mature adult, with perfect character, was Jesus Christ? As a general statement, all of us are to be seeking the maturity level of Christ. If fact, the church is called to equip the saints (Eph. 4:11-12), with this goal in mind: *“till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect (mature NAS) man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”* (Eph. 4:13).

**FACT FILE**

**Perfect/Mature** – *teleios* (Greek), meaning goal, or purpose; finished, that which has reached its end, term, limit; hence, complete, full, wanting in nothing.<sup>8</sup>

We know that this is our goal, and when Christ returns we will be perfect and mature, “...we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him...” (1 John 3:2). Until then, we continue to grow into His image (Rom. 8:29). All of us have to go through the same process, from childhood to adulthood. Luke 2:52 states that “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” Note: Jesus increased in wisdom, or mental growth; in stature, or physical growth; grew in favor with God, or spiritual growth; and in favor with men, or social growth. We have limited influence in the physical growth of our children. But the other three – mental, spiritual and social - we have a big part in making this happen. It is not by accident that these characteristics are mentioned about Jesus, they are for our instruction. God wants our children to grow in these areas.

We want to be able to say of our children, as Paul said of himself, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Cor. 13:11). He noticed in his own life that there was a progression. Through godly discipline and training, we will see our children gradually put away childish things and grow into mature adults.

***Mature Character Defined***

In order to succeed, certain character qualities and skills must be developed that will enable us to aim at and hit the bull’s-eye of maturity.



They are:

- 1) **Morals and values**
- 2) **Personal responsibility**
- 3) **Self-control**

These all work in unison to produce **mature** character.

**1. MORALS AND VALUES**

First, we must instill biblical morals and values into our children, give them a foundation of knowing right from wrong. Every day they are bombarded with worldly morals and values through the media, public schools and their own peers.

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<sup>8</sup> Zodhiates, 1372.

**FACT FILE**

**Morals and Values** – for the Christian, *morals* are defined by what is right and wrong from God’s perspective. *Values* are the principles, or actions you live by, meaning that your behavior shows what you value most.

Previously, we discussed the importance of *disciplining* our children and instilling God’s Word into their hearts. We are to follow Jesus’ example, as He prayed to the Father for his own disciples: “*Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth*” (John 17:17), and “*you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*” (John 8:32). Once our children are disciplined in the truths of Scripture, they will have that freedom of knowing what is contrary to the Word of God, and what results from disobedience. They will be able to discern truth from error and recognize temptations from the world, the flesh or Satan.

There are going to be times along the way when our children question biblical morals and values. When those times come, and they will, you must firmly stand for what God says is right and wrong, not offer your opinions, or worldly philosophies. When the Bible says something is right, or wrong, we should never compromise.

This is what God instructed our father of the faith, Abraham, to do with his children:

**Genesis 18:19** “*For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.*”

As we have learned, God told Abraham to structure his house so that his children would be righteous and follow the way of the Lord. Righteousness means right standing with God; therefore, Abraham’s *training* was to be directed in such a way that it drew his children into right thinking and right behavior in God’s eyes. This describes the process of growing in wisdom and favor with God. We increasingly understand what is *pleasing* to Him (2 Cor. 5:9), and do it.

**2 Corinthians 5:9** “*Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him.*”

Remember, we disciple our children by our example, instruction and Bible study.

**2. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

The quality of personal responsibility is instilled in a child by training and persistent biblical discipline. The graph we looked at previously shows the percentage and progression of choices we make for our children

from birth. Everyone comes into this world completely dependent, but it is essential that we learn to make responsible choices for ourselves. It is sad, and difficult to watch a youth who has not learned personal responsibility. In my counseling, it does not take me long to realize that they are immature due to lack of training at home to develop this character trait.

**FACT FILE**

**Personal Responsibility:** the ability to take care of oneself; to follow through on things you have committed to do, or the things required, without anyone else having to prompt you; taking ownership, being accountable and accepting responsibility for your actions.

If you are *faithful* in training, your children will develop to a point where less discipline is needed and you will be rewarded by their growing maturity.

 **SELF-EXAMINATION**

List two behaviors for each of your children that show personal responsibility (examples: I do not have to ask them to make the bed, clean room, take out trash or to do their homework...).

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Now, write out two indications of irresponsibility (I have to keep asking them to...).

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As we have learned, training a child is *progressive* and new challenges will appear with each new stage

of their development. One of the major issues with youth is “not wanting to admit” to being wrong. When children become teenagers, they suddenly inherit some kind of superior wisdom, in their own mind, and now they know it all. When you confront them about something, they will blame someone else, come up with excuses and avoid being personally responsible. This is why the following chapters are **so** important. We have to structure our homes as a training ground, not as a debating or negotiating courtroom.

Most children are the same; blame shifting and avoiding responsibility was the first tactic used by Adam and Eve after they sinned by disobeying God. Back in the Garden of Eden, God stated that, “*of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat...*” (Gen. 2:16-17). Adam and Eve were personally responsible to obey this *one* command. Satan came to Eve, tempted her to eat the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:1-5), she ate it, and then gave it to her husband and they both fell into sin (vs. 6) by disobeying God. When God confronted Adam and Eve about their sin, this is how they responded:

**Genesis 3:12–13** “*Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.” And the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”*”

Notice how Adam actually *blamed* God by saying, “*the woman You gave me,*” and the woman *blamed* the serpent with, “*the serpent deceived me.*” They were avoiding personal responsibility for their sin. Instead of taking *ownership* of their actions and being accountable before God, they shifted blame.

If we are not mindful, our children can *develop a habit* of blaming circumstances, or others, to escape responsibility for their actions. Children will naturally want to blame a sibling – “he did it”, or “she made me do this or that”, or “it’s his fault, not mine.” Correct biblical discipline will help a child *learn* personal responsibility and take responsibility.

Instilling personal responsibility into a child takes *consistent* training, *time* and *patience*. Parents, this is something we must model before our children, showing them the way by example. Our personal life can display personal responsibility by the way we tend to our homes, jobs, possessions and our commitments.

## SELF-EXAMINATION

Ponder this question for a moment, and write out your conclusion below.

How do you think it affects a 15-year-old child when their Christian parent gets angry, uses hurtful words, or ignores them as part of their discipline plan, and then never takes responsibility for the sinful actions?

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Parents can show irresponsibility in their jobs by being late often or by a house that is messy all the time because no one is keeping it clean. How have you been irresponsible in front of your children?

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The principle of personal responsibility is that of *maintaining good works*. Parents have the awesome privilege of training their children to have a good work ethic. We asked you to write down some things that you do not have to remind your children to do, such as make the bed, clean room, take out trash and so on. For most children, doing chores and wanting to help around the house is NOT a priority. Without proper training, their childish character will continue into adulthood. Parents, our homes are the best training ground to prepare children for the work force and life. One of the main reasons so many young adults today make poor employees is because they were not trained in *personally responsibility* and to do a good job.

When Paul wrote Titus, a pastor he had trained on the island of Crete, he was concerned with the body of believers maintaining good works.

**Titus 3:14**, “And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.”

Notice that he was writing Titus about a congregation, yet he called them “*our people*.” Paul felt that he and Titus were personally responsible to train people to maintain good works and meet other’s needs, and therefore be fruitful. To maintain good works means to be a responsible person, concerned for others, and able to do what is needed. Our children need a lot of help with this; they are born without the character of personal responsibility, are selfish, and do not care for others. One author says concerning this verse:

*Titus was to teach the other Christians (our people) to show hospitality, to care for the sick and afflicted, and to be generous toward those who were in need. Instead of working merely to meet their own needs and wants, they should have the distinctly Christian vision*

*of earning money in order to share with the less privileged (see Eph. 4:28b). This would save them from the misery of selfishness and the tragedy of a wasted, unfruitful life.<sup>9</sup>*

An exhortation of what needs to be done within the church family, this also is what we should be striving for within our homes. We can teach our children to be personally responsible IF we know how. When doing this we are honoring God, exalting His name, and blessing our children.

**DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY**

How can this verse apply to parenting?

**Colossians 3:17** *“And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”*

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Read each of the following Scriptures and comment how personal responsibility would be involved and the fruit from having it.

**Proverbs 10:4** *“ He who has a slack hand becomes poor, But the hand of the diligent makes rich.”*

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**Proverbs 12:14** *“ A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth, And the recompense of a man’s hands will be rendered to him.”*

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**Proverbs 12:24** *“ The hand of the diligent will rule, But the lazy man will be put to forced labor.”*

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9 William MacDonald, *Believer’s*, 2146.

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**Proverbs 12:27** *“ The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting, But diligence is man’s precious possession.”*

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**Proverbs 13:4** *“ The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.”*

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**Proverbs 14:23** *“ In all labor there is profit, But idle chatter leads only to poverty.”*

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**Proverbs 15:19** *“ The way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns, But the way of the upright is a highway.”*

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**Proverbs 21:5** *“ The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, But those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.”*

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**Proverbs 21:25** “ *The desire of the lazy man kills him, For his hands refuse to labor.*”

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**Proverbs 21:26** “ *He covets greedily all day long, But the righteous gives and does not spare.*”

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**Proverbs 22:29** “ *Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men.*”

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**Proverbs 28:19** “ *He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, But he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough!*”

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### 3. SELF-CONTROL

The third character quality that our children must develop is **self-control**. This also can be considered the ability to self-discipline (to manage one’s feelings and actions). As you will see, self-control is essential to living successfully according to godly morals and values.

#### **FACT FILE**

**Self-control** – the ability to govern oneself emotionally, physically, and spiritually; the ability to not always yield to the path of least resistance.

The vital importance of this area of character development is clear. When it comes to making moral, biblical choices, it requires self-control to stand firm and not take the path of least resistance, which means

to *be lead by* the flesh. Being under the power of the Holy Spirit, emotionally, physically and spiritually, is God's will.

Self-control includes having the ability to **resist one's emotions**. As you well know, we sometimes *react* to people and/or circumstances with sinful behaviors. During week 3, we discussed the difference between *reacting* and *responding*, and came to the conclusion that a reaction indicates lack of self-control and is fleshly, and that a godly response is motivated by love, which is an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. When we react to our emotional impulses, we often follow through with physical sinful actions.

**DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY**

Read the following Scripture and relate it to the emotional aspect of self-control.

**Proverbs 29:11** *"A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back."*

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 **SELF-EXAMINATION**

Write out an incident when you let emotions get in the way, resulting in sinful behavior toward someone.

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Let's look further at the **physical aspect** of self-control.

**2 Peter 3:17**, *"You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked."*

What Peter is saying here is that there needs to be some self-restraint or self-control, when it comes to our choices.

**DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY**

Read the following Scriptures and write out what the consequences are for the lack of self-control.

**Proverbs 25:28**, *“Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls.”*

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We are commanded to exercise self-control.

**1 Peter 1:13**, *“So think clearly and exercise self-control...” (NLT)*

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Every Christian is to be self-controlled, but without proper training and or a desire to attain it, one will not acquire it.

**Galatians 5:22–23** *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”*

What does this verse promise all of God’s children?

**Philippians 1:6** *“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”*

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In his book, *The Believer’s Secret to Holiness*, Andrew Murray says:

Self-control in a Christian means that instead of insisting on having our own way, we choose God’s way; we turn to Him for our marching orders and we obey His loving commands. We agree to allow God’s Holy Spirit to live in us and work God’s will through us. Then, when the Spirit has free reign, He is able to bring us closer to God’s ideal of perfection, and holiness. <sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew Murray, *The Believer’s Secret to Holiness* (Bethany House Publisher, 1984), quoted in *God’s Treasury of Virtues*, (Tulsa: Honor Books, 1995), 422.

These three character qualities - **morals and values**, **personal responsibility**, and **self-control** - are our target, the *bull's-eye* we want to hit dead center. Do you know that every foolish act your son or daughter has done to date, and will do in the future, involves a violation of one or more of these? Why, because they were born without them. It is our job as parents to teach and instill them through training.

It is so important that you see and understand this, because having no clear bull's-eye means having no direction, and you will end up in a place you don't want to be. Having clarity also brings unity between husbands and wives, helping them work together toward a clear, common goal.

### SELF-EXAMINATION

Answer this question. If we as parents do not have clear goals and a plan to reach it, how are we going to measure our success?

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If a corporation wants to sell three million dollars worth of product in a 12 month period, it would be wise to have a clear plan and check quarterly, at least, asking, "Are we close to our mark?" It would be reckless and irresponsible to wait until the end of the year to measure success. Likewise, if you have clear goals and methods for training up your children, you will be able to measure your success. In a later chapter you will learn how to implement a procedure that can help you and your children see how close you are to your goals.

### OUR KIDS NEED TO KNOW THE BULL'S-EYE

By the time I was fourteen years old, my distorted view of manhood included being a tough guy, using drugs, drinking, and having many girlfriends. I foolishly went after all that! I trusted no one who could tell me otherwise. No one ever gave me that *bull's-eye* of character, or encouraged me to shoot for it.

I have interviewed hundreds of teenagers over the years, and less than five percent even come close to giving the proper definition of a *mature* adult. When I ask them, "When do you think you should know?" most respond with, "I don't know." When I asked does it just happen or is it something you have to do? Their answer included "when you move out, I guess when you get a job, start taking care of yourself, or maybe when you get married and have kids. I don't know."

It is our responsibility as parents to make this clear. This generation of teenagers is so lost because a godless world is defining the wrong bull's-eye. Public schools, media, music, television shows, Internet, books, and magazines are forming the wrong bull's-eye. Satan is bombarding our children with lies, confusion, and misdirection. This is why it is so important for us to clearly define both our goals for *maturity* and the *methods* we are going to use to get them there.

More than likely, you were not fully taught the importance of instilling the three key characteristics we have discussed. The Bible says very clearly that God desires our children to acquire **morals and values**, **personal responsibility**, and **self-control**.

In closing this section I would like to restate something: it is going to take a combination of *discipleship* and *discipline* (training) for this all to take place. I would like to show you the importance of this from the following Scripture.

**Proverbs 23:7** says, *“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.”*

*“As he thinks in his heart”* means what a person believes about right and wrong. *“So is he”* refers to a person's behavior, or what he does, which can be said to define who he is.

Most parents are more interested in changing the *“so is he,”* meaning their child's behavior, and less focused on training of the heart. You can see there are two principles at work in this verse, and *“as he thinks in his heart,”* comes before *“so is he.”* So the priority must be to disciple our children, which will in turn affect their behavior. We must change the way our child thinks, as well as disciplining their behavior.

For example, your son calls his sister a hurtful name, so you need to follow through with a corrective consequence for his behavior, but you also need to teach his heart by disciplining him in the knowledge of right and wrong.

The Word of God teaches us how to treat others, so we need to be faithfully disciplining them.

**Ephesians 4:29**, *“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.”*

By hearing the Word of God, a child becomes schooled, or disciplined, in understanding right and wrong. Of course, this would not be complete after a one-time lesson. The principle of not letting corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth includes how to talk to each other. A combination of discipleship and discipline teaches personal responsibility and the knowledge that a *choice* to disobey always has a *corrective consequence*.

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## WEEK 8: DAY 3

### Introduction: The Four Tools of Training

As we have learned, training children according to Biblical principles applies to various types of families, both two-parent and single parent. And, when married, a couple is to function as a team; both are responsible for discipling and training the children, although fathers have the primary leadership role. We also studied Ephesians 6:4, at the beginning of Week six, which presents the New Testament standard for training and disciplining children.

**Ephesians 6:4**, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training [**discipline** ESV] and admonition [**instruction** ESV] of the Lord.”

#### FACT FILE

**The Goal** – “Bring them up,” is *ektrepho* (Geek), and it means that we are to bring our children to maturity.

That is God’s goal, and therefore should be ours as well. We learned that progress is measured by observing a child’s improvement in the areas of *morals and values, personal responsibility and self-control*.

#### FACT FILE

**The Method** – The method that God uses to mature and train His children is discipline.

Discipline is a planned process covering all aspects of training a child, including discipling in righteousness and the instilling of mature character. In New Testament times, the Greek culture was attentive to the discipline of children. When writing Ephesians 6:4, Paul used the word *paideia* (Gk.), translated *training/discipline*, from the word *pais* (child), referring to the systematic training of children. This indicates correction for wrongdoing, further explained in a verse from Proverbs, “He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.” (Prov. 13:24).<sup>11</sup> And, as defined in a theological dictionary, training “also denotes the upbringing and handling of the child which is growing up to maturity and needing direction, teaching, instruction and a certain measure of compulsion in the form of discipline or even chastisement.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> John F. MacArthur, Jr., *Ephesians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 319.

<sup>12</sup> Vol. 5, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 596.

**FACT FILE**

**Admonition or instruction** – is the Greek word *nouthesia* in (Eph. 6:4), and translates as a “warning, exhortation, or any word of encouragement or reproof, which leads to correct behavior.”<sup>13</sup>

This refers to having a corrective influence on someone through verbal instruction, leading to increased understanding of proper conduct. For our purposes, all instruction is to be **“of the Lord.”** Our desire must be to instruct in God’s way: We are doing God’s will by instilling godly character in our children using God’s method of discipline.

**PARENTS MUST DISCIPLINE THEIR CHILDREN BECAUSE:****1. God commands us to discipline – Proverbs 19:18; 22:6; 23:13-14.**

**Proverbs 19:18**, “Discipline your son while there is hope, and do not desire his death.” (NAS)

Discipline is the Hebrew word *yasar*, an imperative verb, which means that it is a command. God is exhorting us to discipline our children from the earliest possible age. This verse indicates that a child who is left undisciplined can reach a point beyond parental influence, and will not have the self-control to say no to sin, which could result in spiritual and even physical death.

**Father’s, did you hear the strong exhortation and consequences if this is not taking place in you home?**

**2. Discipline demonstrates God’s Love – Hebrews 12:6.**

**Hebrews 12:6**, “Because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.” (NIV)

Just as God disciplines us because He loves us, so we should discipline our children because we love them. Discipline is a form of love.

Have you viewed discipline toward your children as love?  Yes  No

If a parent is angry, agitated and/or threatening when disciplining, would a child perceive it as love?

Yes  No

I have worked with many kids in juvenile hall who have told me in anger, “I know my parents don’t love me!”

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13 Zodiates, 1017.

This was not necessarily because their parents abandoned them, beat them, introduced them to drugs, or moved from place to place. These kids were convinced that their parents did not love them because they did not *discipline* them! A child realizes when a parent neglects them; won't take the time and effort to teach them right from wrong; fails to correct and train them; and does not enforce rules and discipline. This says loud and clear to a child that a parent does not care and does not love them.

### 3. ***Discipline produces mature, godly adults – Ephesians 6:4; Psalm 32:9.***

As we saw from Ephesians 6:4, “*bring them up*” means to raise our children to maturity, and “*training*” refers to discipline, which is the *means* by which maturity is developed.

By illustration, consider the horse, or mule, which is trained and guided with, a bit and bridle because they lack the ability to understand. In a similar way our children must be guided by discipline until they gain understanding. Thankfully, a child schooled with biblical discipline will someday not need that “bit and bridle” of parental discipline, but will be an independently responsible adult.

**Psalm 32:9** says, “*Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding, which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, else they will not come near you.*”

They will reject authority and not take responsibility.

As parents, we sometimes discipline our children in reaction to their “foolish” behavior, forgetting that the goal of discipline is to raise mature adults. Mere age does not make an adult; rather, maturity is characterized by **morals and values, personal responsibility and self-control**. It is evident in our society that many individuals come of age and are not yet mature adults.

### 4. ***Discipline keeps peace in the home – Hebrews 12:11.***

**Hebrews 12:11**, “*For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*” (ESV)

When proper discipline is consistently administered, it will yield peaceable fruit.

We would all agree that any home with children is a hotbed of excitement, noise, accidents, tears, hectic schedules, and countless unexpected events on a daily basis. But I also believe that, as Christians, our homes can be a place where God's peace reigns over all!

- Would you describe your home environment as peaceful, calm, harmonious and unified?  
 Yes    No

## THE “TOOLS” OF DISCIPLINE ELIMINATE CONFUSION:

I use the word “tools” because God has given us some practical principles, or tools, to help us carry out discipline. Many parents are confused, and have not considered biblical methods of discipline, as we often use the same processes that our parents used with us. A man and woman join in marriage, each with their own history, with “preconceived ideas” of discipline. Then, they each approach discipline with these ideas, as well as others from current trends, family members and friends. Eventually, the resulting confusion leads to division between husband and wife.

This is NOT the way God has designed the family to function. The Bible says that, *“God is not the author of confusion but of peace”* (1 Cor. 14:33). Sure, we may gain some “ideas” in how to discipline our children from other sources, but it always has to be in line with God’s Word, because His Word is the truth that instructs us in the ways of righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16-17). God is the source of information, the provider of biblical principles for disciplining His children His way. And the Bible warns us that His ways are not our natural ways. God says, *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:9). That is why we must continually be in His Word, and following His instruction.

You may have noticed that I continually bring you back to the truth that *your* children are *His* children. Why am I doing that? Because it is so easy to lose that perspective and lapse into incorrect, self-motivated practices and attitudes with “our” children. This principle is so important; Proverbs shows us that even those ways that seem “right” to us can end in disaster.

### **DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY**

Read the following verses and in your own words, explain how parents can be deceived and the possible result.

**Proverbs 14:12** *“There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”*

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**Proverbs 21:2** *“Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, But the LORD weighs the hearts.”*

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Before I explain how to use God’s tools to build mature character, I would like to remind you again that the proper sequence for training our children is first discipling in righteousness, and then Biblical discipline.

Discipling **must** be the foundation for discipline. Remember, *“For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he”* (Prov. 23:7). In other words, until the heart is transformed, the behavior may be learned, but true righteousness cannot exist. As we discussed last week, many parents spend most of their time trying to change the *“so is he,”* or the behavior, rather than the heart. The *heart* is changed through love and discipleship. Remember, if you discipline without love, you will produce rebellion rather than obedience.

**DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY**

Please read the following Scriptures and write out what they say about a man’s heart and his actions.

**Proverbs 27:19**, *“As in water face reflects face, so a man’s heart reveals the man.”*

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**Mark 7:21**, *“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders.”*

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**Proverbs 4:23**, *“Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.”*

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Remember, Ephesians 6:4 ends with the phrase, *“admonition of the Lord”*, which is an exhortation for us to look to Him and His Word, and to follow the example of how He trains and disciplines us.

The following scripture shows us not only what our attitude and response should be to God’s discipline, but primarily that He loves us and His motives are only for our good.

**Hebrews 12:5-6**, *“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening [discipline] of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.””*

There are important principles in these verses to help parents develop a clear plan for “chastening” and “scourging” a child.

### FACT FILE

**Chastening or discipline** – is the same Greek word used in Ephesians 6:4 (*paideia*), and means correction or training. In other words, there is a consequence for every offense; some type of training/correction will follow.

### FACT FILE

**Rebuke** – means to convict, to prove one in the wrong.<sup>14</sup>

In our context, God’s Word is the standard for right and wrong behavior. Adults use the scriptures to guide and correct themselves. In the same way, parents need to define, develop and communicate biblical rules of conduct for the family, complete with a plan for corrective discipline when necessary.

### FACT FILE

**Scourges** – entails all and any suffering, which God ordains for His children, which is always designed for their good. Also it includes the entire range of trials and tribulations, which He providentially ordains and which work to mortify sin and nurture faith.<sup>15</sup>

Another way to put it: God uses “a measured amount of pain to motivate us to accept His training,” so that we may be conformed into the image of Christ. In a similar way, we are to do the same with our children in order to motivate them to accept our training.

Reviewing the principles just presented, our task as parents is to...

- 1) Define rules based on God’s view of right and wrong behavior.
- 2) Have a plan for correction, or “consequence,” when a rule is broken.
- 3) The use of punishment to help a child receive the corrective consequence, if they are refusing it. This would be used for rebellion.

### DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY

Read the following Scripture and explain what God’s motive is for correcting His children.

14 Zodhiates, 562.

15 Zodhiates, 948.

**Proverbs 3:12** *“For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights.”*

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 **SELF-EXAMINATION**

How does this differ from your current motives?

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What are some of the unloving attitudes, facial expressions or words that are used during discipline that needs to be changed?

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Remember the words of Jesus.

**Revelation 3:19** *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.”*

It is in this spirit of love that I will elaborate further on these principles: I call this information the four tools of training.

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## WEEK 8: DAY 4

### Four Tools of Training/Disciplining

The following categories include the “tools” you will need to build personal responsibility and self-control into your children.

1. Rules/Boundaries
2. Corrective Consequences
3. Punishment/Motivator to Yield
4. Consistency

## TOOL # 1 – RULES/BOUNDARIES

### Rules and boundaries must be clearly written.

First, we must establish boundaries, or rules, that are written. These give a child security and stability. Parents tell me, “My kids know what our rules are.” But I have found that they are mistaken. I ask parents to tell me the rules, and then I bring the children into the room. They usually give me more rules than their parents did. This is due to a common style of parenting where mom or dad is upset, and shouting, “If you ever do that again, such and such will happen.” After a while, parents forget what they say in the heat of anger; but the kids do not. Rules need to be clearly written out. God gives us a great example to follow.

**Deuteronomy 4:13**, *“So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.”*

God wrote His commandments on stone! He knew we needed something written down. He governs the whole world with just these ten rules; in most homes you can get away with less than ten rules.

### Rules must be written out for the following reasons:

1. **Written rules reduce confusion for both parents and children alike.** If anybody in leadership, whether in the work force, government, or church, does not articulate his expectations to those under his authority, he will surely fail. Clearly stated rules and boundaries define the behaviors desired, and indicate when a corrective consequence will be implemented. Example: You have a written rule, “clean up your own messes,” and your child makes a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, leaving the jars out and a knife oozing with jelly stuck to the countertop. Clearly a violation of the rule. When children fail, it just means they need corrective consequences, which is the second tool of training.
2. **Written rules build and maintain unity between parents, promoting team spirit.** Unwritten rules are as confusing and divisive for husbands and wives as for the children. When parents agree on the rules, they are motivated to support one another when a

rule is broken. Children will try to manipulate one parent to not follow through on a rule; however, when you stay unified and stick to the plan, it promotes maturity in the child and blesses the marriage.

3. **Written rules eliminate double-mindedness and unfairness.** Parents frequently make the mistake of giving the youngest child, or “baby” of the family, unfair mercy compared to older children. Have you ever heard one of your children say, *“You love him more than me!”*? Also, without written rules and predetermined corrective consequences, there is the potential for parents to act differently toward a more challenging child than they do toward a compliant child. The challenging child will begin to perceive by your actions that you love their sibling more. When the rules are written, and the corrective consequence for breaking the rules is predetermined and equally enforced, most unfairness will be eliminated. This includes neglecting parental discipline due to physical and emotional factors such as illness, tiredness, or stress, which can and will be exploited by children, resulting in circumstances that are unclear and unfair.
  
4. **Written rules keep us from being inconsistent.** We are more inclined to follow through if a rule is written down. I have found this to be challenging for many parents because it requires persistence over the years. Many couples who started strong with this principle have revealed to me, *“Things were going great at home when we had our rules written down but, after a couple of months, we slowly slipped back into our old habits.”* And the chaos is back.

Parents, this is so important. If we are not willing to make changes, be accountable, and remain consistent, how can we expect to train our kids to live responsible, self-controlled lives?

## ACTION PLAN

Take a few moments to write out how your parents disciplined you. Next, write down the rules and consequences that you are currently enforcing in your home. If married, write your lists separately, then compare. If your children are over eight years old, ask them to give you their version of the rules.

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## TOOL # 2 – CORRECTIVE CONSEQUENCES

**FACT FILE**

**Consequences** – that which follows from breaking a rule. In other words, when you have a rule there *must* be a corrective consequence for breaking that rule.

Corrective consequences are like vegetables. Most kids don't like them, but they are vital to good health. Kids may tell you that they don't like rules and consequences, but they know in their hearts that they need them.

Throughout the Scriptures, God clearly communicates that there are conditions for blessing and consequences for disobedience. God gives man freedom to choose for himself. It is a simple principle. Even before sin entered the world, God established the principle of a rule and a consequence for breaking it.

**Genesis 2:16–17**, *“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*

The rule given to Adam was *“you shall not eat,”* of that one tree, and the *consequence* was that *“you shall die”* when you do. When Adam and Eve broke this rule, they both suffered consequences. And there are many more consequences resulting from breaking this rule listed in Genesis 3:16-19.

God continued this principle when He gave His “law”:

**Deuteronomy 11:26-28** *Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today; and the curse [or a consequence] if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God. —emphasis added.*

The law, or God's *rules*, were in the form of commandments given to Moses, and he wrote them down. We find them in the Old Testament books of Exodus through Deuteronomy, which also includes the 10 commandments. God always indicates that obedience brings blessing, disobedience results in judgment, or correction, sometimes called a curse. The blessings and curses are expounded upon in chapters 27 and 28, of Deuteronomy.

God provided written rules to help the children of Israel stay in proper relationship to Him, others, and the world, or cultures around them. He had their best interest in mind and Moses' writings made God's will quite clear. Unfortunately, most of the Israelites under Moses' leadership, headed through the desert to the Promised Land, rebelled repeatedly and suffered the consequence. God let them wander the desert for 40 years until they died and then their children were led into the land.

**The principle is very clear:** there is a boundary/rule; you break it, and there is a consequence.

Just as our discipline plan has predetermined rules, so we must have a predetermined consequence for correction when a rule is broken. We must give our children clear boundaries and, if they cross them, we must apply discipline in the form of a corrective consequence. When we do this, we can view their failures as an opportunity for training, a positive experience, as we remember that this is **love**.

This principle is well illustrated by sports. Consider football; if you step out of bounds, you have broken a *rule* and cannot go up to the referee and say, "Sorry, I didn't mean to do it," expecting him to excuse you from the *consequence*. Rather, the referee is going to proceed with the *corrective consequence* for that infraction by marking the ball down where you stepped out. It is not negotiable. Arguing, or claiming it was an accident will not matter and does not change the *predetermined consequence*. The consequences informs and motivates the players to discipline themselves to stay within the boundaries.

The *corrective consequence* should be predetermined and not thought up at the moment. Let me give you an analogy. Suppose one of your rules is "no jumping on the couch." One morning you walk past the living room and out of the corner of your eye you see your little seven-year-old, the compliant child, jumping on the couch. You think to yourself, "I don't want to deal with that right now, haven't had my coffee yet." In passing, you simply say, "Stop that right now."

Once you have had coffee, you are feeling much better. It is time to get ready for church and you are rushing everyone to get ready. You see your nine-year-old, the strong-willed child, doing the same thing - jumping on the couch. Instead of just saying "stop", you continue with "I have told you so many times not to jump on that couch!" and you spank, and/or impose even further punishment.

That was *not* a predetermined *consequence*; that was spontaneous, emotional parenting. The consequence was based on how you felt at the moment, not on a loving, *planned* process. This type of emotional parenting creates jealousy between siblings and can convince a strong-willed child, who will naturally receive more consequences, that parents love them less. It also exasperates them, and can push them toward a rebellious heart.

### SELF-EXAMINATION

When disciplining your children have you noticed any inconsistencies? If so write them out.

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## TOOL # 3 – PUNISHMENT = THE MOTIVATOR

**FACT FILE**

**Punishment** – A measured amount of pain to motivate, or the infliction of a penalty.

Punishment is part of the overall discipline plan, but it is different from a corrective consequence. Punishment motivates a child to yield to parental authority and accept the corrective consequence.

Read that description of punishment again. Do you see any reference to anger, yelling, cussing, disgust, judging, comparing, ignoring, or pouting in that description? No, you do not. Many of us have found ourselves believing that discipline will not work unless we are angry and raising our voices. That is a worldly philosophy and has no place in Christian homes. Every aspect of discipline must be done in *love*, because **love** is the most powerful motivator, not anger. We must always remember this scripture:

**James 1:20**, *“for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”*

Many parents have difficulty administering punishment; so we need to further consider what God tells us to do.

**Proverbs 23:13-14**, *“Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell.”*

This verse often generates confusion; God is not telling parents to begin beating a child with an implement. Rather, it is an idiom in which the *rod* represents two things: a measuring tool, and authority.

God is telling us that sometimes people need to experience pain in order to mature, or learn to yield to authority. He is not telling you to grab a stick and beat your child into submission. You must take the whole Word of God as His counsel; God’s Word is not contrary to itself.

I must admit, there were times I enjoyed spanking strong-willed Nicholas. But when it came to Justin (who I spanked less than five times in his entire life), and Katie (who I spanked only once), it broke my heart and was one of the most difficult things I ever had to do as a daddy. It was hard for me to follow through with Katie, but I had to do it, because she was testing my authority by refusing to do the corrective consequence.

**DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY**

Read the following verse and write out what it means to you as a parent.

**Hebrews 12:11** *“No chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless,*

*afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."*  
(emphasis added).

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The word *chastening* is *paideia*, the same Greek word used in Ephesians 6:4, to indicate training/discipline. When you read this passage in context, Hebrews 12:3-11, you will notice that there is a comparison between how a father administers pain in the discipline process and God. In fact, God says that if you are without chastening, you are not His son. I do pray that you have felt the loving hand of God's correction when you sinned.

When it comes to carrying out discipline in the form of punishment/pain, I am sure you have heard the saying, "This is going to hurt me more than it's going to hurt you." Perhaps your parents said it. Punishment is given to a child only if they refuse the corrective consequence that follows the breaking of a rule.

There is much confusion about spanking, which is the most common form of punishment for children under the age of eight years. Some parents have told me, "I don't believe in spanking." But as Christians, God's Word tells us that if a child will not yield to our authority and training, we need to find a way to motivate them. You may have had parents who beat you within an inch of your life, or they never spanked you at all. What they did wrong should not dictate your obedience to God's Word. If you do not find a way to motivate your child to receive the corrective consequence, you will pay dearly later. That is not my opinion; that is what Scripture says.

I have been working with parents long enough to see the same strong-willed, three-year-old whose parents said, "We don't believe in spanking," turn into a fourteen-year-old engaging his father in a fistfight, along with many other irresponsible and rebellious behaviors. I am telling you, if a child is unwilling to accept the consequence, then we must find a way to get them to yield and accept it. When you have been blessed with a strong-willed mule, they have to be motivated often.

Some parents do not want to punish, fearing it will affect the child's psyche when pain is administered. Any form of punishment done wrong is "WRONG", and can cause emotional scars to a child. But pain is part of God's overall plan in life. For example, when I was about 11 years old, I was a daredevil. Down at the high school, my friends and I used to jump flights of stairs on our bikes. When we finally mastered one flight, of course, I had to try two flights. I crashed, tearing up my knees and bending both wheels. I was in serious pain, but I rode home, fixed the tires, and was on my bike again the next day. I did not go back and try to jump both sets of stairs again! I did not want to repeat that pain.

Today, when I drive down the road and see someone on a bicycle, I do not have a flashback of when I hurt

myself; I have not developed emotional trauma. This is what worldly wisdom has led us to believe will happen if we use spanking as a motivation. Pain is a good thing, a part of life that teaches us. It taught me to never jump two flights of stairs on my bicycle again. Over the years, pain has taught me in many ways what I can and cannot do.

Certain strong-willed kids need to be *motivated*. They do not like the idea that you are the authority. Remember, God made them strong-willed and they often want to rule and run the household. Sometimes they need those motivators to get them to yield to your authority and accept the predetermined corrective consequence.

This is how a predetermined punishment is used in the overall discipline process. Let's say your rule is "no jumping on the couch", and the predetermined corrective consequence for your five-year-old is a five-minute time out in a chair. By refusing to sit in the chair until the five-minute timer goes off, your child is asking for the punishment/motivator. After a spanking (Principles of Spanking will be covered soon), put them back in the chair and restart the timer at five minutes. No anger, no yelling, no threatening, but a simple process. When your child accepts the corrective consequence by sitting for the five minutes, they are accepting personal responsibility for breaking the rule and also growing in self-control. When they rebel by not wanting to accept the corrective consequence, they simply are asking for the motivator/punishment.

**Understand:** punishment alone does **not** train. Many parents do not understand the correct sequence of corrective consequences and punishment. Remember, all correction is to be administered with love. Why is it that over 80 percent of people who are released from prison ends up back in prison?<sup>16</sup> Because the system is designed on punishment, not training. The moment they are out and "Big Brother" is off their back, they go right back to their former behavior. Learn the process; punishment is the motivator used to help your child accept corrective consequences. You must not lose sight of this truth.

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## WEEK 8: DAY 5

### TOOL # 4 – CONSISTENCY

We must be consistent if we want to see growth in our children. As an example; if I took a survey of how many people drive above the speed limit, if people were honest, the results would show that virtually everyone speeds at one time or another. If I asked each person why he/she speeds, they might say, "Because everyone else does," or "I was late," and so on. But the reason people speed is not just lack of self-control, but the inability of the police department to enforce the rule in every location.

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16 Survey of State Prison Inmates, 1991, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report, August 1995

What if they put a computer chip in your car and no matter where you were, if you went one mile-an-hour over the speed limit, it would send a signal to the police department and three days later you received a ticket in the mail? What would happen to your bad habit of speeding? You would suddenly develop self-control because of the consistent corrective consequences.

Kids are no different. *Consistency* is important. ***If there is no consistency, it is as if there are no rules and no training, and it equals no peace.*** Being consistent will not make our children stop being foolish overnight. Remember, we are instilling character each time we give them a consequence for crossing a boundary (breaking a rule). It is like a muscle that is exercised; every time you discipline (train) your muscle, it grows a little stronger.

### **DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY**

Read the following verse and write out what it means to you as a parent.

**Philippians 1:6**, *“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”*

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Consistency can be hard for moms because they are emotional beings. Moms, do not apologize for your emotions, just do not compromise God’s will because of them. God did not give you that gift for you to use it wrongly. He gave you a nurturing heart, which is good, but you cannot allow emotions to block your obedience to Christ in regard to training your children.

Sometimes dads want to let offenses slide because discipline is too much trouble, or they avoid confrontation, or want to look like the good guy. Do not grow weary, but follow through. Your children need you.

Discipline that is not consistent can teach a child that manipulation is possible, and that everything is negotiable. Worse than producing manipulative kids is the fact that they are going to become adults and go into society, including marriage and the work force, repeating that behavior. Remember, God’s view is that discipline is love in action. Learn to be supportive of one another as husband and wife, and pray for each other. Ask God to help both of you to be consistently obedient to Him in this area.

## What About Counting?

Many parents, especially moms, use counting as part of the consequence process. “Stop doing that! I’m going to count to three, and you’d better stop!” But counting is a destructive component of the training process. Have you noticed that strong-willed kids cannot stand the idea that you are the boss? When you

tell a strong-willed child not to do something, the first thing in his mind is, “I’ve got to win here. I’ve got to prove to myself and my parents that I’m in control.”

For example, that child will approach a forbidden object, make sure you are watching, then reach out and come ever so close to touching it. Once you start with, “Don’t you dare, don’t you touch that,” they have your full attention. Then you continue with, “I’m going to start counting. One . . . you’d better get . . . two . . . two and a half . . . I’m telling you!” By this time your veins are popping out and you are ready to explode. Then he walks away and your little mule merely says to himself, “See, I really am in control, I just consumed three minutes of her time, and look how angry I got her. I’m in control!” Counting can become a very destructive tool if used as part of your training method, and can provoke strong-willed children to continue to try and rule over you.

Instead, you merely say, “Get away from that, now.” If they do not immediately move away, give them a corrective consequence. Follow through. Do not let yourself be sucked into these emotional debates that will get out of hand when they become teenagers, if you don’t stop it now.

When Adam and Eve sinned, you do not read of God counting to them as they stood next to the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He issued the rule with a predetermined corrective consequence (Gen. 2:17), and then followed through with the corrective consequence when they disobeyed (Gen. 3). Even though Adam and Eve both made excuses (Gen. 3:9-13), even blaming God (vs. 12), He just followed through. He did not allow for manipulation.

## Rules, Children and Choices

When I was growing up, there was a popular game show on television called “Let’s Make A Deal.” Many of you who are old enough probably remember the program. The studio audience dressed in wild costumes, hoping to attract the attention of the host and be selected to choose one of three doors on stage. Behind each door was either a great prize, or a *booby* prize. The contestants could go home with a car, a boat, or a can of tuna! When someone picked a door and won a motorcycle, I thought, “How cool, I want to be on that show!”

Many kids want to play “Let’s Make A Deal” when it comes to rules and corrective consequences.

### “Let’s Make a Deal”



Door #1  
Follow Rules



Door #2  
Break Rule and  
Accept Consequence



Door #3  
No Rules,  
No Consequence

The three doors represent a typical child's response to training. We want them to choose the first door and follow our rules. Choosing the second door represents breaking the rules and accepting the corrective consequence for the disobedience. Most kids, especially the strong-willed, want Door #3: *"I don't have to accept the rule, and I should not have a corrective consequence!"* This is like a driver getting pulled over for speeding, issued a citation, then going to court and fighting the fine. He chose to speed, knows that he is guilty, but doesn't want to accept the corrective consequence. This is childish behavior. A child learns to accept consequences as parents follow through with proper consistent training, which builds mature character.

Knowing that children are not yet mature, and do not naturally take responsibility for their actions, how should we respond when they choose Door #3? Shock, anger, screaming, yelling, judging, or becoming frustrated and bitter toward them? Unfortunately, this is the way many parents behave! Instead, we must remove Door # 3 as an option. We need to calmly and consistently enforce the written rules, and clearly communicate to them that they only have two choices, either accept the rule, or break the rule and accept the corrective consequence. Period! **Children who are raised *without consistent corrective consequences* for their actions become adults who do not take responsibility for their actions!** Many parents have unknowingly allowed their children the third option for years and so it is a challenge to re-train themselves and their children to break this ineffective parenting style.

Parents, do yourselves a favor and use a pen or pencil to put a big "X" over Door # 3. If your kids have been choosing number three on a continuous basis and you have been allowing it, do not be surprised that they are going to continue to ask for it. Explain to them, and show them by day-to-day discipline that things have changed.

## ACTION PLAN

Here is an exercise you are to do with your children over the next two days. Sit down and explain to them about these three doors, and their choices. Then, when they start the behavior, you simply remind them, "I know you want door number 3, don't you? Remember our meeting? But it's not happening. Accept your consequence or you are asking for a motivator."

Most strong-willed children will try and pick door number three whenever possible. Your compliant children, like my son Justin and daughter Katie, will more often than not choose between doors one and two. Compliant kids have an inner desire that motivates them to cooperate. You see, for most compliant children it is very important that they please you and that you are pleased with them. Strong-willed children, on the other hand, often seem like they could care less whether a parent is happy or not; they just want to be in control.

## Adapting Our Training without Compromise

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

**Remember:** This is NOT a guarantee but a probability.

“The way he should go” means every child is unique in their personality, and some may need more corrective consequences, tighter boundaries, and tougher consequences than others. This verse also means that we parents must be willing to adapt to each child’s personality, or bent.

When Nick was in school, it was very typical for us to have two, maybe three teacher conferences a year due to him wanting to do his own thing. We were not that surprised to get a call: “Mr. and Mrs. Caster, can you come down to the school? We need to have a little meeting with you about your son, Nick.”

I remember, when Nick was in the third grade, we received one of those calls from his teacher—who was newly married with no children—and she began telling us about Nick’s behavior in class. When she was finished, she asked us, “Do you guys discipline?” We responded, “Well, sure we do.”

But we could tell by her expression she thought we were lying, or that we did not know what we were doing. She ignored what we had said and continued, “It’s really important for parents to set boundaries,” then proceeded to give us advice.

I could tell my wife was getting upset, so I jumped in and said, “Look. I know Nick likes to run everything; it’s his personality. Nick is strong-willed. Yes, we have rules at home. But you just told me this has been going on for several months, and we’re just hearing about it now? Let’s bring Nick in, let’s go over what he’s doing, and let’s agree on a corrective consequence that you can give him here—like picking up trash during lunch or PE. And also, let’s establish a way that you can communicate to us when we pick him up, and then we will follow through with additional corrective consequences at home.”

That is my son. If he did not feel like doing math, he would simply interrupt the whole class, shouting out, “Who wants to go out and play?” That was just Nick. It was a blessing and relief when he began to redirect that strong will in the right direction during his teen years. But believe me, raising him was not always fun.

Two years after Nick, the same teachers got my second son, Justin, the straight-A-people-pleaser, who often wrote little notes on the bottom of his papers like, “I love you; you’re the best teacher.”

At Justin’s sixth grade graduation, the teacher brought each child up and said something nice. When she got to him, this woman began to cry tears of joy, then other women began crying as the men were looking at each other with this puzzled, “What’s up?” expression. She gave a five-minute speech about the wonderfulness of my son. Justin’s teachers would always ask me, “Where did you get this kid? He’s

so good and sweet.” I replied, “Don’t you remember two years earlier when you had my other son Nick?”

Same house, same rules, same parents, different children. God is just so wonderful, He has a sense of humor. Remember He gave our children their personalities.

## The Black Stallion

When Nick was around ten or eleven years old, I remember a day when I came home from work and he was in his room, having a rough day. He had been getting corrective consequences from the time he woke up ‘til the time I came home. He was crying one of those deep, deep cries. I sat down next to him, and said, “What’s wrong?” He replied, “Dad, I’m so bad.”

At this point, I’m starting to get emotional, “What do you mean, you’re so bad?” He answered, “I get so many consequences compared to Justin. I’m so bad.” I just sat there, thinking, “God, help me out here.” I wanted to say, “You’re right.” But God quickened my mind and rescued me.

Just a few nights earlier, we had watched a movie, *The Black Stallion*. I said, “Nicholas, remember that horse in the movie? They couldn’t put that horse behind a normal fence, could they? A four-foot fence was nothing; he’d just jump it. That horse was a black stallion and he was strong-willed; God made it that way. Nick, you’re just like the Black Stallion. Yes, you’re harder to train, Son. Yes, you need more consequences, but think of it as just needing taller fences. I know it’s hard on both you and us sometimes, but you are worth it, and God gave you this strong will. Your strength and your strong will are a gift from God, and someday you are going to use that strong will to do great things for God.”

After we had already named Nicholas, we found out that the name means “a leader of people.” These strong-willed kids are the Peters and Pauls. I praise the Lord for Nick’s strong will. Parents ask me all the time, “Does Nick let you say, or write these things about him?”

My response is, “Are you kidding, Nick’s a star! He’ll even ask you, ‘Want me to sign your book?’” Nick is so confident in who he is in Christ. He also knows he was a tool for the Lord, that God used him to help transform me into the image of Christ.

I never had to meet with Justin’s teachers to set up a consequence for bad behavior, to be enforced at home. I never had to set a homework time for Justin. But with Nick, I had to do those things. He was different. He needed the structure because, without it, he ran amuck. He needed us to come alongside him to help him in these areas.

Be willing to come alongside your children, without comparing them to sisters or brothers. Each is unique,

and if God has blessed you with a strong-willed child, do not look upon it as a genetic dysfunction. Praise God for that child.

 **ACTION PLAN**

Stop right now and use the space below to write a prayer to the Lord, thanking Him for the personality of each child. If needed, write an apology for your critical heart.

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Use these tools and you will see God bring about transformation. Failures and mistakes are common; they are our opportunity to train them. Do not take their mistakes personally or forget that it is your job to train your children. The hard part is just our lazy flesh, but God will give us the grace to do it correctly “if” we desire to.

Would you intentionally rebel against God? Would you tell Him, “I don’t accept Your plan”? You may not tell Him verbally, but you tell Him by your actions. If God has blessed you with a strong-willed child, be willing to engage and stay *consistent* and give the extra *time* and *energy* it takes. When you get angry and yell, or give up and relinquish your responsibility, you are telling God, “I don’t trust You; You made a mistake; You gave me a task that is beyond Your ability to help me do it correctly,” and that is a very serious accusation.

 **SELF-EXAMINATION**

Have any of your actions been saying this to the Lord? If so, write out a confession of what those actions are, and ask His forgiveness.

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## Train Behaviors—Not Attitudes

As parents, we have probably all experienced the “attitudes” and our response is, “Don’t you give me that attitude, young lady!” Unfortunately, it is very easy to confuse bad attitudes with wrong behaviors; but they are not the same, and they must be dealt with differently.

This is a big issue, more for women than men, because God created women to be nurturers. When negative attitudes arise, the temptation for Mom is to follow the child around the house, pleading, “What’s wrong with you?” When the child does not respond with the appropriate change in attitude, the situation can escalate to an argument.

### FACT FILE

**Attitude** – is “a posture or position; a feeling, opinion or mood.”<sup>17</sup>

**Behavior** – on the other hand, is “the act or manner of behaving.”<sup>18</sup>

In other words, behavior is something that is done or not done, breaking a rule or not doing what is expected.

God gives each of us emotions, from joy to anger, excitement to boredom. And each of us experiences different emotions in response to the situations around us. Although our behavior is often tied to our emotional state, or attitude, there is a distinct difference. We cannot choose our emotions, but we can adjust our behavior. Children learn to adjust their behavior through *loving proper consistent discipline*.

Let me explain the difference between attitude and behavior. Psalm 4:4 tells us, “Be angry, and do not sin.” Anger is the attitude; the bad behavior is an action. Parents, your response to a bad attitude is simply to tell your child, “You can be sad, or mad, but if that emotion leads you to kick the wall, that is a behavior that will get you a corrective consequence. You can be very angry because I’m the authority, and this is the rule of the house, but nothing disrespectful should come out of your mouth. You are allowing your negative attitude to manifest into a wrong action that will result in you receiving the *predetermined corrective consequence*.”

**Remember, attitudes are a matter of the heart, and the heart is *not* chiefly changed through the disciplining process. The heart of a child is primarily changed through Biblical discipling, training in righteousness, and their willingness to accept parental love, authority and instruction.**

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<sup>17</sup> Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English Language; Second Edition Unabridged; G & C Merriam Company, Publishers, Springfield, MA 1944

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

It is important to understand that a *rebellious heart* is a *miserable heart*. A child with a rebellious heart has no peace, no joy, no contentment, and no lasting pleasure—all by God’s perfect design. What more correction can a parent add to that?

### **DIG DEEPER: FURTHER STUDY**

Read the following Scripture and write out what Jesus says about 1) how you can acquire joy; 2) how would that joy be lost?

**John 15:10–11**, “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”

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We must learn that we cannot *control* our children’s attitudes and emotions, any more than we can control our own. Attempting to discipline a child for a bad attitude is a losing battle, it’s controlling and can *provoke* them to wrath. Instead, we must allow them to feel the way they feel without getting drawn into something we will regret later.

As a parent, if you know that your child is harboring bitterness toward you, or is rebelling against God’s plan for their life, your *response* must be prayer (1 Thess. 5:16), and patience (1 Cor. 13:4) without compromise. Do not compromise by allowing your child’s bad attitude to make you angry, or resentful, or to misrepresent God in the way you treat him or her. Do not allow their bad attitude to rob you of your inner peace, or to dictate how you follow through with your planned method of training.



### **SELF-EXAMINATION**

Take some time right now and write out any attitudes your children have that cause you to *react* toward them in *anger*.

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## ACTION PLAN

Question: have you asked God to forgive you for this? Now is a good time. Begin to pray each day for God's grace to help you stop, and to start taking responsibility by asking forgiveness of your child every time you lose control.