



## LET'S BEGIN HERE

Now we come to a core teaching of biblical parenting: the role of loving discipline. “Those who love their children care enough to discipline them” (Proverbs 13:24 NLT).

Discipline and love must go hand in hand. To neglect discipline is to withhold love, and disciplining a child without love can do more harm than good. What exactly is loving discipline? To clarify this crucial parental role, we need to make some distinctions.

### ***The Distinction between Discipline and Abuse***

Abuse is unfair and shocking, degrading and demoralizing, extreme and even brutal. It erupts like a volcano spewing red-hot anger, and its aim is to punish. Abuse can be physical, such as slapping, pushing, shaking, and jerking, or emotional, such as shaming with sarcasm, withholding affection, name-calling, and yelling. Abuse creates terror in a child’s heart and leaves deep scars on the soul.

The aim of discipline is correction. Discipline is fair and expected, upholds the child’s dignity and value, and is restrained and controlled. It is motivated by a desire to correct wrongdoing for the good of the child and to enhance self-control and a sense of security.

### ***The Distinction between Crushing and Shaping***

You can see this distinction in your child’s face in the moment of confrontation. Read Proverbs 15:13 and 17:22. How do these verses describe the self-doubting sadness of a child who is crushed versus the self-confident joy of a child who is shaped?

## Quotable

*Emphasize love and encouragement, not just rules and consequences. Uphold the dignity of your child. Do so in public and in private. Show the world you delight in your children.*

— Charles R. Swindoll



### *The Distinction between Childishness and Defiance*

Childishness comes in a variety of coloring-box hues: unrestrained energy, fidgety curiosity, clumsy spilling, distracted forgetfulness, failure-prone fumbling, roller-coaster mood swings, and mud-pie messiness.

Defiance, on the other hand, paints in darker shades: deliberate and stubborn resistance, hateful and selfish bullying, repeated disobedience, sassing, sneakiness, temper tantrums, and a belligerent and demanding attitude.

Loving discipline deals with defiance head on. It changes your child's course from a destructive path of defiant rebellion against all authority, including God, to a path of love for self and others and respect for authority.

Describing loving discipline is simple; doing it is not so easy! Shaping a child's will without being too permissive or too harsh requires the wisdom of Solomon. Thankfully, in Proverbs we *have* the wisdom of Solomon! Let's open its pages to find helpful guidance.



### **DIGGING DEEPER**

The following verses in Proverbs cast light on four principles to lead you safely across the tightrope without tipping to one extreme or the other.

**Start early.** The first principle is in Proverbs 13:24 NASB.

He who withholds his rod hates his son,  
But he who loves him disciplines him diligently.

What are the two styles of parenting contrasted in this verse? And why do you think a child might perceive one style as lacking love and the other as expressing love?



Notice the word *diligently*. Chuck Swindoll says that the noun form of the Hebrew word means “dawn,” and the verbal form means “seek early.” Tucked into this word is our first principle, namely, to start disciplining your child in the early years when the sun is dawning on his or her life journey. As the years pass, the window of hope for good outcomes closes. Read Proverbs 19:18, and note the somber consequences of not starting early.

**Stay balanced.** The second principle emerges from Proverbs 29:15 NASB.

The rod and reproof give wisdom,  
But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

*Reproof* refers to verbal instruction and warning. *Rod* refers to consequences. To reprove is to speak plainly about rules or boundaries. The rod is the corrective response when rules are broken or boundaries are crossed. A reproof uses words; the rod, action. Keeping these two elements of discipline *in balance* is essential. There is a time to stop talking and act; other times, it’s wise to explain further before jumping to a quick consequence.

Look closely at other proverbs that describe reproof-and-rod discipline: Proverbs 3:12; 15:5; 22:15; 23:13–14. Write down what these verses teach.





### Searching the Scriptures Tip

A crucial step in the searching the Scriptures method is application, which involves taking God's Word personally. Application invites God's truth to grip us in areas that need attention and call us to action.

Take a moment right now to apply the reproof-and-rod principle. In the space below, write out three rules or boundaries that you need to explain to your children (or grandchildren if you are assisting in their rearing)—the *reproof*. Then list the consequences of disobedience—the *rod*. Here's an example for a young child, "Put away your toys when Mommy tells you. If you disobey, you will lose the toys you didn't put away until you obey next time. Okay?" Remember, no discipline should take children by surprise. Clear instructions set the table for effective corrections.

**Be consistent.** Take a moment to read Hebrews 12:5–10. Write down the similarities between our heavenly Father's discipline and discipline from an earthly father.

By the way, this would be a good time to grab a Bible dictionary or Bible encyclopedia. Look for entries such as *parenting* and *children*. Read over the material that describes how children and parents related in biblical times, especially in the Old Testament, since that's the period in which Proverbs was composed. Make some notes about things that struck you as significant to your interpretation of these principles.



God's love and reproofs flow together in a steady stream. What is true today is true tomorrow; what was wrong before is wrong now, whether done in public or private. The entire stream flows within the secure banks of a consistent, loving relationship.

Say words of support as consistently as words of correction. Emphasize love and encouragement, not just rules and consequences. Assure your child how much you delight in him or her.

Further principles that emerge from our study are these: *explain rules beforehand; discipline with dignity (privately); administer consequences firmly; assure tenderly*. Now it's your turn to write any other principles you've discovered and how you plan to put loving discipline into practice.

**Be reasonable.** A final principle flows from the compassion of Christ. When you see childish behavior, give correction from a soft heart. Remember your own childhood, and apply the oil of good humor and understanding. Being stern and unreasonable is like dumping grit in the gears, but reasonableness helps a relationship run smoothly.

### **Bring It Home**

If you're a grandparent, your role is to undergird and support your adult children who are the parents. Affirm them, and let them know what a good job they are doing. Talk about issues and ask for clarification, but don't take over their job. How wrong it is for a grandparent to undermine the authority of parents by giving the child anything he or she wants despite the parents' values . . . or by usurping the parenting role and disciplining the child as if you were the parent.



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STUDY

Clarifying the roles between parents and grandparents requires open discussion. As we close this study, write down a plan for the adults in your family to talk about discipline issues. What topics would you like to discuss? What principles are important to emphasize? Is spanking an appropriate correction for defiance? When and how should it be done? What clarifications can you make to the roles of parents and grandparents in rearing children? Setting the course for discipline as a family will make your children even more secure.



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, help us in the journey of parenting to grow under Your loving hand of discipline in our lives. Help us to model a submissive spirit to Your authority. Shape our will. Mold our thinking. Create in our homes a secure place where our children can become mature individuals who love You with their whole hearts. In the name of Jesus, amen.*



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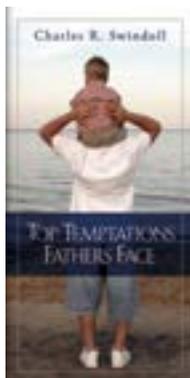
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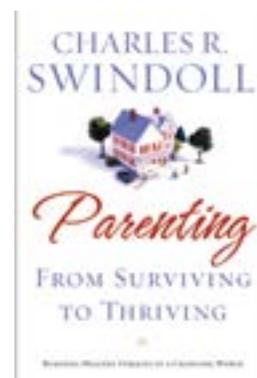
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For the 2017 broadcast, this Searching the Scriptures study was developed by the Pastoral Ministries Department in collaboration with Mark Tobey, based upon the original outlines, charts, and sermon transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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