

BIBLICAL PARENTING

STUDY FIVE

Shaping the Will with Wisdom

Selected Proverbs

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

NOW we come to a core teaching of biblical parenting: *loving discipline*. Discipline is a vital expression of parental love, as the Proverb says, “Those who love their children care enough to discipline them” (Proverbs 13:24).

Discipline and love must go hand in hand. To neglect discipline is to withhold love and disciplining a child without love can harm the child. What exactly is loving discipline? To clarify this crucial parental function, we need to make some distinctions. But first, let’s prepare our hearts as we venture into this subject in which we desperately need God’s wisdom.



PREPARE YOUR HEART

According to James 1:5, God offers His wisdom with an open hand and a willing heart.

If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.

Ask the Lord for wisdom—to know when and how to discipline your child, to discern your own motives, and to grow in grace as you walk closer with your heavenly Father.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The same arms that wrap a child in protective hugs also guide a child with persuasive correction. Wise parents know to discipline with love and avoid extremes. The following three distinctions provide helpful guidelines from Scripture.



Observation: Three Distinctions to Keep in Mind

Observation, the first step in the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study method, involves understanding what a verse is saying without adding our own ideas to it.¹

Read the following verses and write down what you observe regarding God's heart toward those who are weak and His determination to stand for what's right.

He will not shout

or raise his voice in public.

He will not crush the weakest reed

or put out a flickering candle.

He will bring justice to all who have been wronged. (Isaiah 42:2–3)

The “weakest reed” and the “flickering candle” represent those who have been abused. Abuse is never justified when disciplining a child, which brings us to the first distinction.

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.



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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—which leads to the second distinction.

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-confident joy of a child who is shaped versus the self-doubting sadness of a child who is crushed?

The next distinction focuses on the child's heart, which is the spring from which his or her actions flow.

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; being loving is not so easy! Shaping a child's will without being too permissive or too harsh requires the wisdom of Solomon. Thankfully, the book of Proverbs offers us the wisdom of Solomon! Let's open its pages to find helpful guidance.



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Interpretation: Four Principles for Wise Parenting

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 opportunity closes for discipline to be effective for your child. Read [Proverbs 19:18](#) and note the somber consequences of not starting early.



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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.*

Two words in the first line of this proverb describe two elements of proper discipline: instruction and consequences. *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.

A crucial step in the *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study 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. Let's pause right now to think of ways to apply the reproof-and-rod principle.



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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.” Remember, no discipline should take children by surprise. Clear instructions set the table for effective corrections.

Now let’s continue with two more principles for wise parenting.

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, now is 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.

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 smooth.



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Correlation: God's Love and Discipline

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. How does *Psalm 18:19–20* illustrate God's delight in us that we can transfer to our children?

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 consistent. Emphasize love and encouragement, not just rules and punishment. Otherwise, you exasperate your child. It's easy to exasperate and frustrate a child by overly engaging in discipline. How unwise. It builds fear, resentment, and anger. Continue to uphold the dignity of your child. Do so in public and private. Let the child have the assurance how much you delight in her or him. How valuable that is, and you will realize its value more as time passes. —Chuck Swindoll



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Application: Straightening the Sinful Bents

If you're a grandparent, your role is to undergird and support your adult children who are 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.

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.

Discipline your children because you care about them and want to protect them. Through discipline, you will align with God in the process of shaping your children into the people God intends them to become.



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.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



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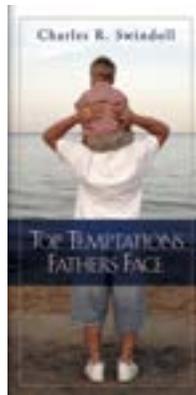
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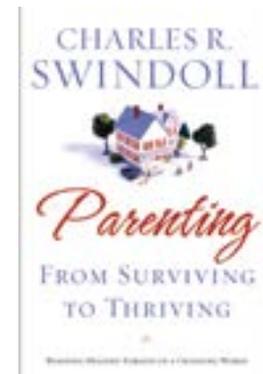
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2020 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

