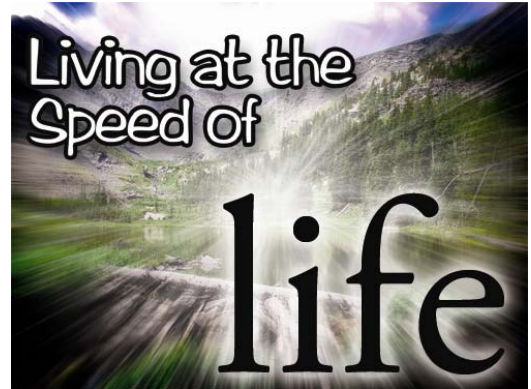


RTM

reaching/teaching/ministering curriculum



May 3, 2009 Loving Discipline Various Scripture Passages

Deuteronomy 6; Psalm 103:8–13; Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, 29:15–17; Colossians 3:12–17; Hebrews 12:5–11

MINISTERING HELPS

Group Prayer

Have group members list the names of their kids or grandkids that are 18 and under. Along with praying for the needs of your class, pray for all the kids and grandkids of group members.

Stay Connected

Take a look at the RISK report that is in your attendance folder today. Assign all those who have S or K next to their name to a class member that will contact them this week. Find out how they are doing and if they have a prayer need along with letting them know we have been missing them on Sundays.

REACHING HELPS

Plan a fellowship outside of class for a date in the month of May.

Send invitations to every member and prospect to let them know the details and that they are invited.

Also challenge members to invite someone who is NOT currently involved in Sunday morning Bible Fellowship.

TEACHING HELPS

We continue our sermon series called LIVING AT THE SPEED OF LIFE. Today we will be looking at the purpose of parenting and ideas for pulling it off.

Today's BFG lesson is a reminder that parents have to be very intentional about what they do. Great and godly kids don't just happen. Today we will look at seven priorities if we are going to parent God's way.



Loving Discipline

Today's lesson is in a different format than you are use to. The Bible study is connected to an article that can be used as a class handout.

What if my class is done with raising kids?

Today's lesson is still a great lesson for adults of all ages. Some ways to connect this to adults who aren't raising kids...

- ▶ All of these are reminders of how God parents us.
- ▶ Grandparents can use these with their grandkids; as well as, share this information with their own adult children who are just now getting into parenting. This will also help grandparents know some specific ways to pray for their grandkids and their adult children who are raising them.
- ▶ Those who don't have kids yet are formulating their ideas on how to raise kids some day. This can help in that process.

Loving Discipline

How can we discipline our children with unconditional love?

Biblical discipline focuses on heart changes, not merely outward behavior changes. It includes consistent training, calm correction, biblical teaching, and clear communication. It also includes punishment, but only in the context of unconditional love, according to Gary Chapman and Ron R. Lee in their article "Loving Discipline That Works," written for CHRISTIAN PARENTING TODAY. In parenting, this means we never withhold love when we discipline, but instead see discipline as part of love, just as God disciplines those he loves.

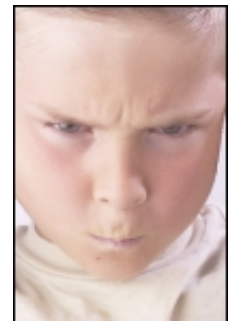
This study considers: How can parents discipline in love? What are the components of loving discipline? Why is discipline an essential part of loving our children? How do we focus on heart changes instead of concentrating only on outward behavior changes? How do we model God's unconditional love and forgiveness?

In today's lesson we will be able to see that each point also connects to how God disciplines us as his children.

Introduction

Note to leader: Prior to the class, provide for each person the article "Loving Discipline That Works" from CHRISTIAN PARENTING TODAY magazine (included at the end of this study).

The heart is the wellspring of life, according to Proverbs 4:23. The behavior a person exhibits is an outward expression of what is happening in the heart. Luke 6:45 tells us good and evil come from what is stored in our hearts, and our mouth speaks what our heart overflows. Current child psychology focuses on teaching our children to behave through external pressures. This includes methods like "behavior modification." Instead of following pop psychology, Christians need to discipline based on biblical methods. This means we must get to the heart issues of behavior.



Tedd Tripp, in his book *“Shepherding a Child’s Heart”* (Shepherd Press, 1998), says this means we focus our correction on deeper things than changed behavior. Tripp says we focus on unmasking sin and helping our children understand how their behavior reflects their heart. This also helps them realize their need for the Savior, Tripp believes. When a child changes his heart out of a desire to love and obey God, the behavior change follows.

Discussion starters:

- [Q] What are the differences between a child who behaves only due to external pressures and a child who behaves out of a heart’s desire to obey God? What long-term effects could each of these have? Why?
- [Q] Love and discipline are often thought to be opposites, yet God says in Hebrews 12 that he disciplines those he loves. Why is discipline essential to loving our children? Why is it also essential to not withdraw love when we discipline? How can we affirm our love for our child during discipline?
- [Q] What role does communication have in disciplining our children? Why is it important for parents to stay calm when disciplining?
- [Q] What role does forgiveness play in discipline?
- [Q] What is unconditional love? Why is it essential for our children to know they are loved unconditionally? How can we communicate unconditional love to our children?
- [Q] Why is consistency important in discipline? Why do parents fall into inconsistent discipline?

Lesson

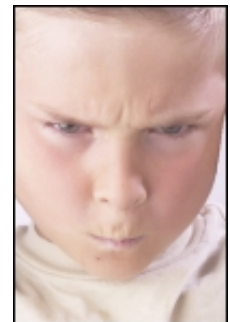
Teaching point one: Diligent training and consistent modeling of God’s ways are foundational to discipline.

Deuteronomy 6:1-25

These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, ²so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. ³Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you.

⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

¹⁰When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you--a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, ¹¹houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant--then when you eat and are satisfied, ¹²be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.



¹³Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. ¹⁴Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; ¹⁵for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land. ¹⁶Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah. ¹⁷Be sure to keep the commands of the LORD your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. ¹⁸Do what is right and good in the LORD'S sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers, ¹⁹thrusting out all your enemies before you, as the LORD said.

²⁰In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?" ²¹tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²²Before our eyes the LORD sent miraculous signs and wonders--great and terrible--upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. ²³But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers. ²⁴The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. ²⁵And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness."

Read Deuteronomy 6. Parents need to know God's Word, hiding it in their own hearts in order to teach it to their children. We want to teach our children to love God with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Deuteronomy says we need to impress this on our children. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* says *impress* means to "produce a vivid perception or image of or to affect or influence deeply or forcibly."

To impress this on our children means it will leave a mark, or in this case, permanent, life-changing teaching. We are to teach this as we live life. According to Deuteronomy, this includes when we sit at home, walk on the road, lie down, and get up. This means we tell our children about God's character and all he has done, using Scripture and experiences from our own life. To train our children how to live, act, and obey God, we need to model the behavior we desire for them.

If our children have a heart to love and obey God, the desired behavior will follow. An example of this would be that manners are used, not as a social norm, but because they are a portion of kindness and respect that God wants us to show to others. Sharing becomes an issue of putting others' needs before our own. God's principles affect every area of life.

Obedience to God is the call on their life, not people pleasing or following culturally acceptable behavior. Training, teaching, and modeling must be consistent, and we must communicate what the consequences of behavior will be and why these consequences apply. Biblical training is a training of the heart, not merely modifying the outward behavior expected by society.

- [Q] Why should training be focused on the heart of the child, not merely on the behavior itself? How should God's Word assist us in focusing on heart changes in our children?
- [Q] Why must parents first know God's Word before they teach it? How is the phrase, "Do as I say and not as I do" in direct violation of God's teaching on child rearing?
- [Q] How should God's ways be part of our everyday life and conversations? How does Deuteronomy suggest we do this?
- [Q] What does Deuteronomy infer about consistency in training our children? Why is consistency important in discipline? What does consistent discipline look like?

Teaching point two: Wisdom comes from correction.

Proverbs 13:24

He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.

Proverbs 22:15

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.

Proverbs 29:15-17

¹⁵*The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.*

¹⁶*When the wicked thrive, so does sin, but the righteous will see their downfall.*

¹⁷*Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul.*

Read Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, and 29:15–17. Chapman and Lee believe correction and, if necessary, punishment, are the steps after training in discipline. Correction for a toddler can be as simple as changing the environment or removing a child from whatever is tempting him or her. Redirection can be a valuable tool in correction. We can help the child replace a poor choice or behavior with a positive choice or activity. A word of correction heads the child in the right direction.

The heart issue is to help teach the child to turn away from temptation and disobedience and head in the right direction. We also need to communicate with our children during correction *why* their behavior or choices are not acceptable, and what the consequences will be if they continue down this path.

If the child continues in defiance and disobedience, punishment becomes necessary. Scripture says if we do not discipline our children, we do not love them. Proverbs 22:15 refers to the heart issues that lead to sin and rebellion. Timely punishment, partnered with biblical counsel and unconditional love, removes the foolishness from a child's heart and teaches him wisdom.

- [○] Why does a child who gets his own way usually bring disgrace to his or her parents? Why do parents give in to their children? Why does that show a lack of care and concern for the child?
- [○] What does Proverbs 13:24 infer about consistency in discipline?
- [○] What foolishness is typically in the heart of a child? How does correction and punishment bring about wisdom in a child?
- [○] What are some practical ways you can redirect a child? What role does communication and biblical counsel play in redirection? Why is it important to replace the negative choice with a positive one?
- [○] When does punishment become a necessary step in discipline? Why are biblical counsel and unconditional love essential partners to punishment?

Teaching point three: We demonstrate unconditional love when we discipline our children for their good, just as God disciplines us for our good.

Hebrews 12:5-11

And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons:

*"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,
⁶because the Lord disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."*

⁷Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? ⁸If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. ⁹Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! ¹⁰Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. ¹¹No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Read Hebrews 12:5–11. Hebrews 12 says God disciplines those he loves, because he deals with us as sons. Discipline is proof that God loves us, that we are his children, and that we belong to him. God's discipline is always for our good.

Our love for our child must be unconditional and unwavering, just as God's love is for us. This means we do not withdraw love during discipline. Our love is not based on our children's behavior, but because they are precious gifts from God entrusted to us. With God as our role model, we must discipline with unconditional love for the good of our children. We must seek God for wisdom in each situation, and ask him to help us display the characteristics of love when we discipline. This means we do not discipline with self-centered motives.

Self-centered motives may take any of these forms: lashing out with words or physical attacks because we are angry or frustrated, paying our children back for pain or hurt they have caused us, emotional manipulation, or a desire to dominate. Our purpose in discipline must always be for the good of our child. This means we discipline with patience and kindness, and that we are not rude or easily angered.

Loving discipline seeks to protect our children from the consequences of sin. It perseveres in love as evidenced by consistency. Although discipline is painful for children and parents alike, it trains our children to respect authority and leads to holiness. We discipline in love with the hope and expectation that our children will learn to understand the unconditional love of God, and that they will love and obey him in response.

- Why does God discipline us? What does this teach us about disciplining our children? What should be the desired result of discipline?
- What does Hebrews 12 say are the benefits of discipline? How does discipline produce holiness?
- Why is it important to consider our motives in disciplining?
- How should we deal with the anger we feel when disciplining? What do we do if we have lost control and have disciplined in an unloving way?

[Q] How does a child generally respond to discipline done in anger? How might this response differ if the parent is calm, loving, and consistent when they discipline? Consider short-term and long-term implications.

Teaching point four: We must forgive our children just as Christ forgave us.

Psalm 103:8-13

*The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.*

⁹*He will not always accuse,*

nor will he harbor his anger forever;

¹⁰*he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.*

¹¹*For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;*

¹²*as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

¹³*As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;*

Colossians 3:12-17

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. ¹³Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. ¹⁴And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

¹⁵Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Read Psalm 103:8–13 and Colossians 3:12–17. The moment we confess our sin, God's forgiveness floods over us, and he remembers our sins no more. His forgiveness is as high as the heavens are above the earth, and as infinite as the East is from the West. God calls us to this same kind of forgiveness.

Forgiveness for our children must come from a heart of compassion, kindness, gentleness, and patience. In humility, we forgive our children just as Christ forgave us. Our forgiveness must be complete, just as Christ's forgiveness is complete, leaving no room for grudges, retribution, or constant reminding of the past. Chapman and Lee say once our child acknowledges that she was wrong and is willing to change her behavior, we must make it clear that we forgive her. After forgiveness, we should be restored to the perfect bond of unity, with hearts that are ruled by the peace of Christ.

This process of forgiveness models for our children how to forgive others. It also helps them believe God will forgive them when they seek it. Forgiveness is a step of discipline that helps our children understand God's compassion, lovingkindness, and mercy.

- [Q] Why is forgiveness essential to restoring a relationship with our children? What characteristics of God's forgiveness should also be present when we forgive (Psalm 103)?
- [Q] How might a parent's forgiveness, or lack of it, affect how our children learn to forgive others? How might it keep our children from fully believing or accepting God's forgiveness?
- [Q] What does it mean to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience? How do we do this practically? What do these characteristics have to do with forgiveness?

Apply Your Findings

Discipline consists of training, teaching, modeling, correcting, rebuking, and sometimes punishing. If reproof is needed, consequences and forgiveness should be carefully explained. The focus of discipline needs to be the heart, not merely outward behavior. Parents need to be consistent and diligent in their efforts to raise children who glorify God by their behavior and love him with all of their heart, soul, mind, and strength.

- [Q] Why is it essential for us to deal with the heart issues underlying behavior when we discipline? How can we incorporate God's Word into discipline?
- [Q] With what areas of discipline do you struggle? What changes will you make to improve your discipline?
- [Q] In light of Deuteronomy 6, reevaluate how you spend your time. Do you have the time it takes in your schedule to focus on heart issues with your child and to train them consistently and diligently?

Suggested activities:

Start a parents' support group or small group Bible study to share parenting ideas and biblical methods of discipline. Focus on heart issues.

Share with a friend the areas where you struggle with discipline, and ask him/her to hold you accountable.

—Study prepared by Julie Kloster, speaker and freelance writer

Loving Discipline that Works

Feel like all you do is yell at your kids? Here's a better way

By Gary Chapman, with Ron R. Lee, for the study "Loving Discipline."

Parents face dilemmas like this almost daily: Mikey talks back when you tell him to pick up his toys. He's been talking back a lot, in fact, and you've had it. After getting your anger under control, you send him to his room. You tell yourself: "He'll think twice before he sasses *me* again."



The next day in the car, you tell Mikey to stop kicking the back of your seat. But he keeps kicking all the way to the store, then throws a fit when you won't buy him a box of Happy Hyper Flakes cereal.

When you get him home, you put his favorite toy on a closet shelf, sit him down for a time-out, and tell him he won't be allowed to watch his favorite Veggie Tales video all day. But after his time-out there's another confrontation, and you're about to lose your mind. That's when you ask yourself: "What am I doing wrong? Why can't he just behave?" You know you can't go on like this, but you feel like you've exhausted all the options.

Positive Discipline

We make discipline a bigger challenge than it needs to be, in part because we tend to equate discipline with punishment. But punishment is only a small part of the process. It's more helpful to think of the positive side of discipline, a word that means "training." In training our children to become responsible adults, we teach them the values and skills they need to succeed in life. It's a positive enterprise.

For example, when a child is rude to an adult, a parent's initial reaction might be to punish the child. But before taking that step, consider whether proper manners have been explained to the child. Rudeness can be replaced with respectful behavior. And in practicing good manners, the child also learns important social skills that she'll use the rest of her life. Where punishment might have solved a temporary problem, training sets behavior on a positive course for life.

A second aspect of discipline is correction. While punishment involves a penalty, correction involves turning a child away from disobedience so he'll head in the right direction. In many instances, a word of correction is all that's needed: "Don't ride your Big Wheel into the street because you might get hit by a car."

If words don't work, the next step is corrective action. Let's say the child insists on riding his Big Wheel into the street. Before punishing him, take an intermediate step. Calmly lead him to the back yard swing set. Now removed from the temptation of a busy street, he can have fun in a safer part of the yard.

Training our children and correcting them with words and actions are ways we teach and guide without resorting to penalties. But if your child continues to defy you, it's time for punishment. That's when discipline becomes negative because punishment causes discomfort.

The Love Connection

Whether it's the loss of privileges, a time-out, or a swat on the back of the diaper, punishment gets a child's attention. It shows that the parent is serious about enforcing a rule that the child insists on breaking. But too often, we forget to punish our kids in the context of unconditional love. Some parents fear that heaping love on a child who seems devoted to messing up is giving the child a license to disobey. But that's a misunderstanding of discipline. We need to discipline our children *because* we love them, not instead of loving them. The worst thing we can do is withhold our love as a form of punishment.

When a child is being belligerent, it's natural for a parent to feel angry. But no matter how many times your child breaks the same rule, don't allow your frustration to cause you to love her conditionally. If a child feels neglected, it won't be long before she starts acting up. If her need for love and attention still isn't met, she will likely continue the same misbehavior, or do something worse, until she feels loved.

My wife and I raised two children to adulthood. One of our kids was almost always cooperative, while the other seemed to be constantly in trouble. I know how easy it is to shower love on the pleasant child and present an impenetrable facade to the child who regularly pushes the limits. Like most parents, I've thought to myself, *I'll start giving him lots of hugs when he starts controlling that smart mouth of his.* But I realized that following that impulse is putting conditions on love. And conditional love doesn't reflect God's approach to us, which is an unwavering love that is unaffected by our failures.

God disciplines us because he loves us (Hebrews 12:5–7). It's crucial that we express unconditional love to our children even as we punish them. A child needs to hear: "I love you no matter what, even when you disobey. But you kept hitting your brother after I told you to stop, so I'm not going to allow you to play with your friends today. You have to stay indoors."

Just as we know we can turn to God with our deepest sins, disciplining our children in love will keep them turning to us even as they get older and the stakes become higher. For some teenagers, home is the last place they want to go when they're in trouble. But if a teenager has felt unconditional love, he's more likely to come home and tell the truth when he's in trouble. If his parents' love is dependent on his good behavior, however, he'll look for help somewhere else.

We want our children always to turn toward home, so it's essential that we put no conditions on our love. Whether we are teaching and training, correcting our children with words and actions, or punishing them for repeated misdeeds, we need to do it in love. God loves us no matter what we do. We need to link our discipline with that same kind of love for our kids.

—Gary Chapman is a pastor and counselor who leads seminars on marriage and family life. He is the author of several books, including The Five Love Languages of Children (Northfield), co-authored with Dr. Ross Campbell, and The Other Side of Love (Moody). For information on his seminars, call (800) 254-2022 or (800) 356-6639.

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