

Lecture Notes: Chapters 8 - 12

1. Embracing Biblical Methods: Communication

God's Word must not only inform our goals in parenting but also in our methods. Methods and goals should be complementary.

A Biblical approach to children involves two elements that you weave together. One element is rich, full communication. The other is the rod. The rod and communication must always be woven together in the actual shepherding of children. In the book of Proverbs, we find these two methods side by side.

Proverbs 23:13-19

Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death. My son, if your heart is wise, then my heart will be glad; my inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak what is right. Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the Lord. There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off. Listen, my son, and be wise, and keep your heart on the right path.

Proverbs 23:22

Listen to your father who gave you life and do not despise your mother when she is old.

Proverbs 22:26

My son, give me your heart and let your eyes keep to my ways...

Proverbs 18:2

A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.

These passages couple the rod with rich entreaty. Both are essential to biblical child rearing.

Let's first look at communication:

Communication is Dialogue, not Monologue

The finest art of communication is not learning how to express your thoughts. It is learning how to draw out the thoughts of another. Your objective in communication must be to understand your child, not simply to have your child understand you.

Focus on Understanding

Your first objective in correction must not be to tell your children how you feel about what they have done or said. You must try to understand what is going on inside them.

What is important in correction is not venting your feelings, anger or hurt; it is, rather, understanding the nature of the struggle that your child is having. You must develop skill at probing the heart to really understand your children.

The "Why did you..." line of questioning never works with children. Consider these productive questions:

1. What were you feeling when you hit your sister?

2. What did your sister do to make you mad?
3. Help me understand how hitting her seemed to make things better.
4. In what other ways could have you responded?
5. How do you think your response reflected trust or lack of trust in God's ability to provide for you?"

Proverbs 18:2

"A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions" describes what it is like to talk with someone who delights in understanding you. What kind of activities are present in a conversation with a person who delights in understanding you?

2. Embracing Biblical Methods: Types of Communication

Most parents quickly acknowledge that 80 to 90 percent of their communication is rules, correction and punishment. Communication must be multi-faceted and richly textured. It must include encouragement, correction, rebuke, entreaty (an earnest or humble request), instruction, warning, teaching, and prayer.

Parents can fall into "mono-speak" with their children. One might yell most of the time. Another might plead a lot. Still another might order his/her children. Whatever the parenting style, parents tend to use the same type of communication all the time. The Word of God holds out something richer and more satisfying than that.

Encourage: Communication designed to inspire and fill with hope and courage.

Correction: Remedies something wrong; gives children insight into what is wrong and what must be done to correct the problem.

Rebuke: Censures behavior, said with alarm and indignation

Entreaty: Earnest and intense. Involves pleading, soliciting, urging and even begging.

Instruction: The process of providing a lesson, a precept, or information that will help the child understand their world.

Warning: Faithfully alerts us to danger while there is still time to escape unharmed.

Teaching: The process of imparting knowledge. Most powerfully done after a failure or problem.

Prayer: Praying with your children and listening to their prayers give insight into a child; it's a window into their souls. Praying with your children, recognizing that hearing your prayers will communicate your faith in God to your child.

I Thessalonians 5:14

And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

Like this passage, we must use varying communication methods to fully communicate with our children. Idle children need a warning. Timid children need encouragement. Weak children need communication that helps. It is a mistake to help the idle. Warning the timid may crush him.

3. Embracing Biblical Methods: A Life of Communication

Communication not only disciplines, it also disciplines. A regular habit of talking together prepares the way for talking in strained situations. You will never have the hearts of your children if you talk with them only when something has gone wrong.

Shepherding the Heart means helping a child understand himself, God's works, the ways of God, how sin works in the human heart, and how the Gospel comes to them at the most profound levels of human need. It involves helping them understand their motivations, goals, wants, wishes, and desires.

Children do not pour their hearts out or open themselves up on a demand schedule. A wise parent talks when the kids are in the mood. Every so often they will ask a question, make a comment, and reveal some little aspect of their heart. In those times, when their conscience is stirred, you need to talk. This may require dropping everything else to seize a critical moment.

Is it worth the cost? You must regard parenting as your most important task while you have children at home. This is your calling.

When children grow older, your authority decreases but your influence can and should increase.

When a child knows that all his life you have sought to see the world through his eyes, he will trust you. When he knows that you have not tried to make him like you or like anybody else, but only sought to help him realize his full potential as a creature God made to know Him and live in the relationship of fellowship with Him, he will trust you.

Our message in communicating with our child is not "be like me," but rather "come with me to where sinners find forgiveness and grace".

4. Embracing Biblical Method: The Rod

The Nature of the Problem

Children are not born morally and ethically neutral. The Bible teaches that the heart is "deceitful and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9, KJV). The child's problem is not an information deficit (as if he were morally neutral, just lacking information). His problem is that he is a sinner.

Proverbs: 22:15

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

God says there is something wrong with this heart. The folly in his heart must be removed, for it places the child at risk.

Throughout the Proverbs, folly/foolishness is used to describe the person who has no fear of God. The fool is the one who will not hear reproof. The fool is the one who will not submit to authority. The fool lacks wisdom (fear of the Lord).

The fool's life is run by his desires and fears. This is what you hear from your young children. The most common phrases in the vocabulary of a 3-year-old are, "I want..." or "I don't want..." The fool lives out of the immediacy of his lusts, cravings, expectations, hopes and fears. Will the child live under the authority of God and therefore the authority of his parents, or under his own authority - driven by his

wants and passions? Allowed to take root and grow for 14 or 15 years, it will produce a rebellious teenager who will not allow anyone to rule him.

The use of the rod is not a matter of an angry parent venting his wrath upon a small, helpless child. The rod is wielded by a faithful parent, recognizing his child's dangerous state, employing a God-given remedy. Ephesians 4:31-32, Colossians 3:12, James 1:19-20.

The Function of the Rod

The rod is a parent, in faith toward God and faithfulness toward his or her children, undertaking the responsibility of careful, timely, measured and controlled use of physical punishment to underscore the importance of obeying God, thus rescuing the child from continuing in his foolishness until death.

Proverbs 29:15

The rod of correction imparts wisdom...

Properly administered discipline humbles the heart of a child, making him subject to parental instruction. An atmosphere is created in which instruction can be given. The spank renders the child compliant and ready to receive life-giving words.

Hebrews 12:11

No 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.

The rod is a rescue mission. The child who needs a spanking has become distanced from his parents through disobedience. The spank is designed to rescue the child from continuing his foolishness. This issue of a child failing to obey a parent is more about the child's failure to obey God because God commands a child to obey his parents.

The rod is not retribution or payment of a wrong. Use of the rod must have the positive goal of restoration.

The Fruit of the Rod

The rod teaches outcomes to behavior. When disobedience is met with painful consequences, young children learn that God has built the principle of sowing and reaping into their world.

The rod shows God's authority over mom and dad and trains a child to be under authority.

The rod demonstrates parental love and commitment. Heb. 12:5-6 "For whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

The rod yields a harvest of peace and righteousness.

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.

The rod returns the child to the place of blessing. Left to himself, he would continue to live a lust-driven life. The rod of correction returns him to the place of submission to parents in which God has promised blessing.

5. Embracing Biblical Methods: Appeal to the Conscience

Your correction and discipline must find their mark in the conscience of your son or daughter. Paul reminds us that even those who do not have the law of God show that its requirements are written on their hearts when they obey the law. They either excuse or accuse themselves in their thoughts because of their conscience. The conscience is an inner ally.

The rod gets the attention, but the conscience must be plowed up and planted with the truth of God's ways. Appealing to the conscience helps our children not escape the implications of their sin and deals with the root problems, not just the surface issues.

The central focus of childrearing is to bring children to a sober assessment of themselves as sinners. They must understand the mercy of God, who offered Christ as a sacrifice for sinners. How is that accomplished? You must address the heart as the foundation of behavior and the conscience as the God-given judge of right and wrong. The cross must be the central focus of your child-rearing.

The alternative (to living out of a transformed heart by God's grace) is to reduce the standard to what may be fairly expected of your children without the grace of God. The alternative is to give them a law they can keep. The alternative is a lesser standard that does not require grace and does not cast them on Christ, but rather on their own resources.

Many parents fear they are producing little hypocrites who are proud and self-righteous. Hypocrisy and self-righteousness is the result of giving children a keepable law and telling them to be good. To the extent they are successful, they become like Pharisees, people whose exterior is clear, while inside they are full of dirt and filth. The genius of Phariseeism was that it reduced the law to a keepable standard of externals that any self-disciplined person could do. In their pride and self-righteousness, they rejected Christ. And so will our children if we do not hold them to God's standard, which is only attainable through the grace Christ provides.

Prayer

- Consider ways your parenting style must change if appealing to the conscience and the centrality of the person and work of Christ are to be your focus in the future.
- Journal:
 - I must stop the following:
 - In the future, by God's grace, I must:
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you to yield to the grace that God is giving you in this season for parenting in order to make these changes by His power.