



October 25th, 2007

On a Personal Note . . .

Child discipline. This is always a matter of interest for parents with children still at home. As a parent of three children, it is certainly a matter of interest to me. I thought I'd talk about child discipline here in this post. There is no one passage on disciplining a child, but I think Proverbs is the most natural place to start when it comes to exploring this issue. Let me share with you my philosophy of child discipline.

Proverbs 19:18 says, "Discipline your son while there is hope and do not desire his death." A simple reading of the verse tells me that if I do not discipline my children, I desire their destruction. Proverbs 13:24 says, "He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently." A simple reading of this verse says that if I truly love my children, I will discipline them. Discipline is not unloving; lack of discipline is unloving. This verse also says I am to discipline my children diligently. That speaks to careful planning and the consistency in the practice of the discipline plan.

So thus far, God's Word has told me that I have to discipline my child, that I need a discipline plan, and that I need to be consistent in enforcing that plan.

Proverbs 23:13 says, "Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you strike him with the rod, he will not die." I'm unsure how a parent can read this verse and not see that God favors corporal punishment or to put it in layman's terms, spanking. In fact, when one reads the book of Proverbs, which speaks numerous times to child discipline, God simply assumes spanking will be part of any child discipline plan. At the same time, every argument I have ever heard against corporal punishment is rooted in humanistic thinking and advocated by secular psychology. Humanistic thinking teaches that corporal punishment leads to aggressive and resentful children and teenagers. Talk about defying God's perspective. The verse I just typed says that biblical corporal punishment leads to my child NOT ending up in destruction. Quite the contradiction to humanistic thinking about the consequences of spanking. Clearly, there is to be a heavy dose of corporal punishment in my child discipline plan.

Spanking is sometimes a controversial issue because of issues of child abuse. Of course, there are proper ways and very improper ways to spank a child, but make no mistake about it, the purpose of spanking is to pain the child. It is supposed to hurt them. A spanking of the proper degree of intensity will cause the child to genuinely cry. A spanking that does not cause the child to cry or simply causes the child to fake-cry, is a spanking that is too soft. The aim is not to break the spirit of the child, but the will of the child. The aim is to change the person of the child, not simply to call for immediate behavior change. By that I mean, there are times I have spanked my son and when I got done he corrected his behavior at that

moment, but I could see in his eyes and his posture that he was still defiant. I knew I had not properly disciplined him because his person hadn't changed. He was not submitting to my authority; he was angry at me for correcting him. A proper spanking causes the child to bow their will to the will of the parent. If you get done spanking your child and their will is not bowed to yours, you have not disciplined your child, you have merely had a momentary behavior correction. With all that said, the only appropriate place to spank a child is on the bottom. Any hitting of a child on the legs, arms, torso, feet, and head is abusive and unacceptable. Further, beware of spanking too hard. The best way to avoid spanking too hard is to ensure you are not spanking in anger as an act of revenge. You are spanking them because you love them and desire their person to change for their own good. If you spank too softly, you will not change their person, if you spank too hard, you will injure your child. It is a process of trial and error. I started with a relatively soft stroke and worked my way harder and harder. From time to time, I'll hit myself on the leg to test the degree of pain. I say this because there are child abusers, and child abuse should be stopped. But to be sure, the most common reason why spanking isn't working in a household is because the spanking is simply not hard enough.

So thus far, God's Word has told me that I have to discipline my child, that I need a discipline plan, that I need to be consistent in enforcing that plan, and that the discipline plan needs to include a heavy dose of corporal punishment.

Proverbs 29:15 says, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother." This verse provides another important insight into child discipline. My discipline plan is also to include reproof. Reproof means verbal explanation, chastisement, or rebuke. In other words, for discipline to be biblical, it must include explaining to the child what they did wrong, why it is wrong, and that it is unacceptable behavior that cannot be repeated. This is where some parents make mistakes. A child deserves to be told why what they did is wrong and what the punishment is going to be. I often say that the reproof comes first. We never spank our child for a first time offense. By that I mean, if our children don't know something is disobedience, then we never spank them the first time they do it. Either Nicole or I will sit them down and tell them what they did and why it is wrong. From then on it is a punishable offense. Remember, we don't punish our children because we are angry and want revenge; we punish them because we are shaping them and molding them to become mature, Christ-loving adults one day. We try to be as clear as possible with our kids about where the boundaries are, and then they choose whether or not to cross the line. Coupled with the discipline, the reproof leads to wisdom for your child.

So, to put it all together, God's Word has told me that I have to discipline my child, that I need a discipline plan, that I need to be consistent in enforcing that plan, that the discipline plan needs to include a heavy dose of corporal punishment, and that the discipline must come with a proper explanation to the child.

Let me reiterate that the purpose of child discipline is to change the person, not just for immediate behavioral change. This is why philosophies like "redirecting" and "time out" are often ineffective. They promote immediate behavior change, but the child herself is not changed. God has put the child in your home to be molded and shaped into a mature, Christ-loving individual. That requires you working to bring change to your child's person. Any child raising philosophy that is simply an endless string of immediate behavioral corrections for 18 years is unfair on the child, exhausting for the parent, and entirely unloving. A parent is responsible for shaping the heart and mind of the child. Remember, from the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. Your child's behavior is simply the fruit of what they believe in their heart. You can keep cutting off bad fruit, but it won't change their heart. You are charged by God to change their heart. "Redirecting", "time out", and attempts to reason a child into heart change is ineffective and unfair on everybody involved. Biblical discipline means changing the

heart of the child.

Ok, so it is time to put all of this together. Let me share with you our current discipline plan for Colton, our first born. As he gets older, Nicole and I will adjust it to suit his maturity and physical development, but this is how we have put these Biblical principles into practice.

- We are committed to disciplining our children. Before we are their friends, we are first and foremost their parents, the authority placed over them by God for 18 or so years, to shape them and mold them for a life time of adulthood. Scary? Yes. It causes us to spend much time on our knees.
- We have a discipline plan custom designed for each of our children. Obviously, there is not one for Cassidy as she is only one month old. Since I am talking specifically about Colton, let me stick with the plan we have for him. The plan includes a heavy dose of spanking--almost all of his discipline is done by spanking. Occasionally, we will use loss of privileges (withholding blessings). We spank Colton in sets of three or four. Four is reserved for the worst of offenses which are lying/deceit and defying his mother. Otherwise he gets three swats the vast majority of the time. We settled on three or four swats for Colton through trial and error. It is what works on him. We don't spank him with our hands anymore; that was only for when he was much younger. If I'm home, I do the spanking. I take Colton into my study and we sit on the couch and I tell him he is about to get a spanking and then I explain why and how many swats he is getting. Then he has to lay his chest on the couch and put his arms out to the sides and put his feet on the floor, and I spank him on the bottom hard enough that it causes his will to bow to mine. Truthfully, I hate doing it. The screaming and the crying goes right to my heart, but, as Proverbs says, if I truly love Colton, I will discipline him with the rod, and so I do it out of obedience to God.

(Some might think that the spanking would cause my child to hate me. The opposite is actually true. Every time I have spanked him he has come to me within minutes and climbed in my lap and burrowed in against my chest. I always wrap my arms around him and tell him how much I love him and how I am proud of him and that I wouldn't trade him for any other son in the world. I think of God, Adam, and Eve when the Lord evicted them from the Garden of Eden. Though He had just severely punished them by kicking them out of the Garden, the Lord turned right around and made them clothes to wear. He is a just and loving Lord.)

- Someone may wonder how often to spank their child. Is it too much to spank your child every day, and is it not enough if you only find yourself spanking your child once per week? My answer is that you can't determine how often your child gets spanked; that is for them to determine. I have spanked Colton as many as four or five different times on the same day. I have gone over two weeks without spanking him. It seems like he goes through seasons. There will be a set of days in which he submits to our authority and we use minor verbal reminders and it works. Then there will come a set of days where he insists on disobedience and insubordination, and that is unacceptable. Our children decide the frequency of their spankings.
- Here is the great thing about biblically disciplining your child. Proverbs 29:17 is true. "Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul." Though he is a child in need of shaping and molding, Colton is not a trying child because of the "diligent" discipline. He is not a chore to manage. Despite the need for discipline, he is a joy to have in our home, and he adds so much to our family and our lives. I truly love my boy.
- Even better, the clear and consistently enforced discipline plan makes Colton a happier and more confident child. He is sure about what is right and wrong in his world. He knows that when he lives within the boundaries we bless his socks off and when he goes outside the boundaries that there are repercussions designed to bring him back inside the lines. In God's unique way, it demonstrates genuine love to Colton and he relishes his life in that kind of love.

I want to encourage you to become a parent who practices biblical discipline. I'm uncertain as to what

books you have read, but I'd strongly counsel you to remember that the Word of God supercedes any other book on the issue no matter how much you might admire the author(s). Be careful that you make sure you craft your child discipline philosophy and practice from the Bible, as the Scriptures are the final authority on all matters of faith and practice. Be diligent in the biblical discipline of your child and you and your child will reap the rewards.

Building Update - Experience the Future

I can't wait for us to break ground on our building expansion. The project is going to give our building new features, expand current features, and give the exterior of the building a face lift.

NEW FEATURES: First of all, the project is going to give us a new worship center. It is not simply a bigger model of the current worship center; it is an entirely new worship center. The layout will be different in that though the audience will still face a westerly direction, the room will be longer than it is wide instead of vice versa. The number of seats will triple. The stage will be almost the width of the room. Storage rooms for the music and sound ministries will be behind the worship center. We will have light racks and a high end sound system. The layout and size of the room is going to greatly diminish the distractions caused by people coming and going from the worship center during the services. The project is going to give us a large outdoor baptismal plaza on the south side of the building in the part of the new field that is closest to our building. A large and beautiful plaza is going to heighten our understanding of the crucial role baptism plays in the life of the believer. The project is going to give us an entirely new facility for teenagers. In fact, in this expansion project, the master plan for the youth facilities will be realized. There will be a 5,000 square foot worship center for the teenagers which has the dimensions of our current worship center. The current sound system and speakers will be moved up to that worship center. It will be possible to seat 400-500 teens in the room for the Sunday morning general assembly times as well as SWAT, the Wednesday night full-blown worship service for teenagers. There will be lots of rooms for teenagers to provide areas for small group Bible Study and discipleship. There will be funky rooms designed as gathering places for the teenagers to hang out and build relationships. All of this will be upstairs on the east side of the building in the space that has yet to be built. The project will give the preschool and children's ministry a cutting edge check-in area in the expanded and renovated lobby as well as significantly upgraded security and control features.

EXPANDED FEATURES: Two current features set to be expanded in the new plans will be most noticeable. First, the lobby. Our lobby is going to double or triple in width. A large welcome area will be built as well as an area designed and devoted to checking in preschoolers and children. There will be a large coffee stand area built into the lobby for people to get drinks before and after services. Sitting areas will be provided for people to relax with friends in the lobby. The other most noticeable expanded feature will be more preschool and children's rooms. We need more preschool and children's space, and this expansion plan will accomplish that.

EXTERIOR FACE LIFT: The plans call for us to brick the exterior of the building in a fashionable design. Some of the tin siding will be incorporated in the attractive design, but almost all of the building will be bricked. It will look like a new facility from the outside. The new exterior look will announce to the community that significant facility changes have taken place at Northeast Houston Baptist Church. It will also give our facility a more upscale look from the outside so we are no longer the tin church. Additionally, though it won't be seen, our roof will receive a significant and much needed overhaul.

Unfortunately, the construction of our roof was less than stellar, and we have struggled with leaks when it rains ever since we moved into the building. Multiple roofing contractors have told us that unless we

overhaul the roof in the next two to three years, we are in for major problems. Both the design and construction were sub par. We aim to remedy the situation with the building expansion project.

For these reasons and more, I am ready for us to get on with the building project. Let's continue to pray for the Lord to provide the funding so that we will have a bigger tool with which to do the work He is doing in and through our church. I love y'all.

Fall Festival

The Fall Festival is this coming Wednesday night. Great plans have been laid and are currently being executed. I believe we are going to have a great event this year. Obviously, the Fall Festival is a form of big event evangelism, and so the objective of the event is to reach the lost and unchurched. If you have not already done so, please be proactive in contacting your lost and unchurched friends with preschool and elementary age children and grandchildren and invite them to the Fall Festival.

Let me remind you of what the Fall Festival is like. It takes place in our north parking lot where a wide variety of booths and exhibits are set up around the perimeter. There is face painting, food, game booths, contests, music, bounce houses and other blow-up things, and of course, mountains of candy to be given out. The event is open to the public, and everything is free except for the food.

This year's Fall Festival will be Halloween night, Wednesday, October 31, from 6:30-8:30pm. The theme is HEROES. We encourage the kids to dress in family friendly, HERO costumes in order to enhance their experience at the event.

Outdoor Work Day

This coming Saturday from 9am to noon is our annual fall outdoor work day. This year we have several outdoor projects that need handling. Project team leaders have already been designated, and the supplies are in. When folks arrive to participate, they will be assigned to a team that will have a clear project assignment and game plan. Projects range from spreading dirt to flower bed work to replacing exterior light fixtures to power washing to working on the basketball courts.

If you are in town, I'd like to encourage you to come out for three hours and pour time, energy and sweat into our church campus. Bring some work gloves and a shovel and let's be faithful stewards of the property that the Lord has entrusted to us. Sacrificial service.

Middle School Lock-In

Once again, the event was a spiritual success. Two teenagers trusted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and still others made decisions of a different kind. I love the way Pastor Wes doesn't preach an easy Gospel. The teens are truly called to live their lives under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and to count the cost of doing so. The teenagers of Northeast Houston Baptist Church are constantly challenged to remember that salvation is a trading of the rest of one's time here on earth for eternity in Heaven. Believers are tools in the hands of God for the rest of their time on earth which is a small price to pay in exchange for the glories of Heaven.

The night began with two hours of worship service at NEHBC. There was great music, prayer, biblical preaching, and a strong call for decisions. Then it was off to Mountasia for hours of play. Go-carts, video games, batting cages, putt-putt golf, bumper boats, and lots of caffeine.

At events like this, I am reminded that ministry to teenagers is truly a calling. I love the hearts of the adults who commit each year to stay up all night to provide young teens with the opportunity to have an all night fun bonanza. I'm so proud of the adults who sacrificially serve the Lord through this ministry. They understand that it is a worthy cause to stay up all night if it means young teens will be called to trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The adults who serve at the lock-in understand that an event of this nature is a huge lure for middle schoolers. A big and hearty thank you to the adults who chaperoned the event. I'm so proud of you.