



Love Them, Discipline Them

I am trying to write an article on “discipline”, yet I am having a very difficult time finding the discipline to even begin the article. What is discipline anyway? Better yet, what is the Bible’s definition of the word discipline?

The word discipline has many different meanings and connotations in the world today. In fact, The American Heritage Dictionary defines discipline as follows:

1. Training expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behavior, especially training that produces moral or mental improvement.
2. Controlled behavior resulting from disciplinary training; self-control.
3. Control obtained by enforcing compliance or order.
4. A systematic method to obtain obedience: a military discipline.
5. Punishment intended to correct or train.
6. A set of rules or methods, as those regulating the practice of a church or monastic order.

It seems that most of us probably look at definition #5, punishment intended to correct or train, and think that it is the most commonly used meaning of the word discipline. However, Biblical

discipline focuses more on definition #1, training that produces moral improvements, i.e., self-control.

In Hebrews 12:5-11, God shows us that He disciplines His children whom He loves greatly.

5 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,

6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”

7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

9 Moreover, 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!

10 Our 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.

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.

Therefore, discipline in the Biblical sense of the word is encouraging, positive, and even proof of love, as shown by God in Hebrews 12. Using this passage in Hebrews, we can draw many parallels between Our Heavenly Father’s discipline over His children (us) and the way parents are called to follow His pattern of discipline in dealing with their own children.

1. We see in Hebrews 12:6 that God disciplines His children because He loves them. Likewise, parents should be motivated to discipline their children out of love, not anger.
2. Similarly, verse 9 shows us that God disciplines as a way of teaching His children respect. Thus, as parents, our goal should be to gain our children’s respect. This can only be done through proper discipline. Discipline involves following through, and consistency is the key. If we as parents do what we say we will do, our children will have a greater respect for our authority.
3. In verse 10, we are shown that God disciplines us for our own good. Similarly, parents discipline for the good of their children. We discipline them or train them so they can develop the “fruits of the Spirit”. The limits we set on them as parents help them to develop



the inner control that they need when they are on their own to choose their own decisions wisely.

- 4. Verse 11 tells us that God disciplines us so that we may experience righteousness. Parents in turn discipline so their children may be moral and wholesome. In today's culture, it is very important that children have strong Biblical values and morals to keep them on the path that God intended for them to follow as believers in Him.
- 5. Finally, verse 11 also tells us that

God disciplines us so that we may have peace. Parents too should discipline their children so their children will have peace and a sense of serenity.

All too often in today's society the focus of discipline with our children is punishment instead of training. We are punishing their misdeeds when we would be better off using discipline to "train up a child in the way he should go" as commanded in Proverbs 22:6. This process would instill a sense of what the correct behavior is in all

situations that our children encounter. Similarly, if we start disciplining our children when they are young, they should have the tools to develop spiritual discipline when they get older. Although at times discipline may be painful for all parties involved, hopefully it will result in obedience to authority figures and ultimately faith in God. Being obedient to God will produce abundant blessing which we all desire for our children's future.

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