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## CORRECTING CHILDREN

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### Part 18 of Proverbs

Pastor Mark Driscoll | February 17, 2002

Good morning, everybody. Go to Hebrews 12, please. As you're turning, last week we asked you to pray for Tim, his wife, Beth, and their newborn daughter, Trinity. He's our worship pastor. Had some severe complications, but they're doing much better and they're at home this morning. So, Luke and his team are out from the paradox and just keep praying as well that we get some sort of facility option open up. We'll do 8:00, 10:00, 12:00 and 5:00 here; we'll do 6:00 and 8:00 still over at the Paradox; and 5:30 down in the south end is moving to a new location.

So, I'll pray and we'll get to it. God, thanks for a chance to get together. Thank you for a chance to study, and thank you that the same spirit who inspired the writing of the Scriptures also lives in the hearts of the children whom you love. Thank you, God, that we can understand your Word and that, by your grace and your kindness to us, we can be imitators of you. That's our goal this morning and we come seeking that in Christ's name. Amen.

Our topic this morning is Biblical discipline of children. We're studying the Book of Proverbs. I'll say this too as a preface. If you're not a parent yet, or if, potentially, you may never be a parent, this still is amazingly applicable to your relationship with God, who is your Heavenly Father. And so, feel free to take all the principles I'm gonna give you for kids and parents and, if need be, just directly translate them to your relationship with God.

So, we'll start in Hebrews 12:4 and launch from there. "In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood, and you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses as sons." And then, he quotes Proverbs 3:11-12. "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline and do not lose heart when he rebukes you because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline. God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined, and everyone undergoes discipline, then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 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? 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. 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."

That section, basically, encapsulates all we're gonna be talking about. God is a father who disciplines his children for the purpose of driving out folly, bringing in wisdom and love of him that leads to holiness. The discipline is unpleasant, but the ensuing life is very pleasant. And so, God is thinking long term for the benefit of his children. And we are told that fathers and mothers are supposed to behave the same way that God does. So, what I'm gonna submit to you this morning is a lot of parenting is either intentionally or unintentionally adopted from the parents that you had. And the Scripture tells us that, instead, we should look to the Lord and that God is our Father, and the way God treats us as his children is the way that we should treat our children. So, our cue should be taken from God. And a lot of parenting errors come from either unknowingly adopting a lot of presuppositions of your parents or completely overreacting against them, i.e., the parent who abused their children, and then their children refuse to even discipline their children because they don't want to be abusive.

And when we look at this issue, I wanna just revisit with you this issue in the Book of Genesis. Just think through with me, God creates Adam and Eve in his image and likeness, and God loves them very dearly and we can see that because God has one, provided for them a loving environment to grow up in, to mature in wisdom and knowledge, and favor with him in this lovely place called Eden; and, in addition, God dwells there with them. It says that, "God and Adam walked together in the garden during the cool of the day." God and his child, Adam, he was a man, but his son, is, indeed, in this very loving, intimate relationship together. And God puts in the garden an opportunity for Adam to learn self-discipline. He tells him, he instructs him, that he is free to eat of any tree in the garden, but he must not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. My question to you is where is that tree? It's right in the middle of the garden, according to Genesis 2, which means Adam has to learn to walk by it every day. He has to learn discipline, self control. God then instructs him "Don't eat of it and if you do", what's the consequence? "You'll die." A good parent does that. They lay down the law. "This is what you're not to do" and they explain the consequence. "If you do it, here's what will ensue." God tells him, "If you eat of it, you will die." And the death there is multi-faceted.

We see that when Adam sins, he hides from God. He's spiritually dying. He, you know, turns his back on his wife. His marriage is dying. He literally begins the cycle of entering into physical, literal death. Death just sort of creeps into everything and pollutes the totality of creation at that point and it affects everything. And then, God, when they sin, takes notice of this and God comes to Adam and Eve and he calls out for Adam by name. "Adam, where are you?" And in that, he then addresses Adam and asks Adam, essentially, "What have you done?" At this point, God is affording Adam the opportunity to repent and say, "Well, I did what I wasn't supposed to do." Does Adam avail himself to that opportunity? He doesn't, does he? He does what kids always do. He blames it on someone else. If you go to a kid who's just whacked their sibling, they will say, "He made me hit him." And

that's not exactly accurate. It's not like the one child took the arm of the other child and did this with it. It's not exactly true, but we like to pass blame on others. And Adam, very subtly, infers that it's God's fault 'cause God made this woman and this woman is defective. She's broken. She needs an upgrade. This is woman 1.0. We need to fix her.

And in so doing, then Adam is addressed very clearly by God. "No, you've sinned. You've broken my law. Now, here's the consequence." Does discipline come upon the man and the woman for their sin? Sure. In the form of a curse upon the woman whereby the birthing of children will be painful to her; and upon the man that his domain of work is gonna be cursed. It's gonna be really hard for him to make a living and feed his family. Both things are true. Women having babies are suffering. It's painful. And men who get up and go to work on Monday know exactly what it feels like. That's the way the world works. Does God, though, in his discipline, abandon or abuse them? He doesn't. God still loves them. God still loves them. God comes to them. He makes clothing for them to wear and he drives them out of the Garden of Eden and away from the tree of life. If they continue to partake of it, they live forever and he does that, I believe, as an act of discipline and an act of love. Had they continued to eat of that tree, they would have lived forever, apart from God.

And so, death is a punishment. It's also a means of God's grace. It's a way by which we can come back into relationship with God. So, then he makes a promise in Genesis 3:15 that Jesus will come, die for their sin, and remedy all of this, and reconcile them to the Lord, and reconcile them to each other. That's what a good parent does. A good parent has children, raises them in a loving environment that they're involved in. They instruct the children. "This is the law. This is not the law. This is a sin. This is the consequence." And a good parent knows instruction is vital, and when you read Proverbs, instruction and discipline are the same Hebrew word. They're the exact same thing. Sometimes, it refers to conversation. Sometimes, it refers to conversation. Sometimes, it refers to spanking. And Proverbs sees, the Bible sees, instruction as the goal and discipline as just one of the means of instruction.

So, a good parent lays down laws. And a parent'll lay down two kinds of laws. Primarily, they will lay down the laws of God. Say, "These are the Lord's laws." In addition, mom and dad will have to make house rules, right? In our house we have a staircase. The Bible doesn't have a whole book dedicated to, you know, protocol for small children on the stairs. There is not, you know, first and second stairs.

(Laughter)

That book's not in there. But, God has appointed parents to make rules about the stairs. You know, my son likes to carry sharp objects up and down the stairs. So, we had to make a rule against that. Other rules that parents make are out of love for the child. And if the parent makes those rules, they have to be careful with how they make them, but if the child disobeys God's laws or the parents rules, then that is sin and there is consequence for that. And then, when the child sins like God came to Adam, the parents should come to the children and should explain, "You've sinned. Here's the discipline. Here's the consequence. We're working toward repentance. Here's grace. Jesus dealt with this." And the Gospel does it's work of forgiveness and reconciliation.

So, parenting is nothing the Gospel over, and over, and over, and over, and over, all the time. So, if you don't understand the Gospel, you won't understand parenting. And if you understand the Gospel, you realize that it's God's grace to you because what is happening is that the children are learning how to deal with sin, and bring it to the Lord, and be reconciled. They're doing the Gospel their whole life so, for them, the Christian faith will make perfect sense 'cause that's all they've ever known, not just in morality, but in redemption, and forgiveness, and in holiness. So, that's our theme. What happens then is now every child who is born is a child of an Adam. They have Adam's seed of rebellion within them. Romans 5:12-21 says that, "We're all descended from Adam." Psalm 51:5, David says that he is "Sinful from his mother's womb." So, children are wicked, just waiting for birth as an opportunity. And the Bible is clear as well that, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of the Lord" and Proverbs 22:15 says that, "Folly is bound up in the heart of the child." It's not just behavior. There's something broken in them.

And so, a good parent says, "Well, we have to instruct and discipline and shape this child because they automatically have a tendency towards sin, rebellion, autonomy, disobedience, and we're going to need to remold and shape them by God's grace, and the Word of God, and the Spirit of God, and the Gospel of God, so that this child no longer has a seed of rebellion but, instead, a love for God; and not an unredeemed heart, but a redeemed heart; and not a propensity toward rebellion, but a love of God, and a love of the things of God, and the truth of God. And that folly is taken out and that wisdom is put in because children aren't born with wisdom in their heart. They're born with folly. And any parenting strategy that believes that children are born good, we just need to give them more nurture, love, self esteem, and just let them actualize their potential, that's how we fill up the prisons. We get these wicked kids and we just love them until they actualize all their evil, and then we can't afford all of the penitentiaries to house their deeds. The Bible begins by saying, basically, in Proverbs that the point of discipline is to lead to self-discipline. We'll get into that as we go.

So, here's where we're at. Here are some goals for discipline. Let me borrow your pen real quick. I have to write myself a note. Otherwise, I'll forget something. I think I've got like ADDDDDD.

(Laughter)

Thank you. First thing I'll say, in discipline, you discipline children for sin, but not for error, not for mistakes. Some of you struggle with this because when you were little, your parents would spank you for spilling your milk at dinner, right? Your humanity is not a sin. Your rebellion is a sin. Will small children drop their sandwich? Will they knock over their glass at a meal? When they're teenagers and their feet are just tremendously disproportionate to the rest of their body and they're all gangly and their arms are like, you know, chickens or something.

(Laughter)

Will they knock things over? Will they trip and fall? Yes, they will. Are some of you just naturally klutzy, right?

(Laughter)

Some of you are. Some of you, you know, have – you have certain things set up in your home in such a way as to prevent you from death 'cause you keep falling down, okay?

(Laughter)

It's not a sin to be klutzy. It's not a sin to drop something. You discipline for rebellion, for sin, not for mistakes and error. Last night, we're having dinner at a Chinese restaurant and my son, Zack, he's two and a half, I told this lady, I said – she, obviously, doesn't have kids. I said, "Well, I need two small glasses for the kids for their drinks. So, she brings him this big glass glass. Real glass. And it's tall and it's skinny, and he's trying to drink out of it, and she gives him this really long straw. And he's trying to hold it real tight so he doesn't drop it and it's really slick because it's filled with ice, so there's condensation on the outside. So, what happens to the glass? Pffft. Boom. It just launches like a rocket, right?"

(Laughter)

Okay? And that's what happens.

(Laughter)

Zac launches his 7-Up. I look over, it's just pffft. The next thing I know, I see this glass just, boom, off it goes and it hits the wall and it just goes all over and just, you know, maximum dispersion of this liquid.

(Laughter)

And Zac looks at me like, "Am I gonna get it?" I was like, "You're not gonna get it because that's not a sin."

Response: Right.

It's not a sin for – you know, you're holding the glass and you're two years old and it went flying. I mean, I'm not pleased. I'm not happy.

(Laughter)

I'm wearing 7-UP, but it's not a sin, okay? It's not a sin. We're not gonna discipline you for that. Now, can a kid knock over their glass because they were sinning?

Response: Yes.

Sure. Totally. Totally. You know, you've seen some kids. They knock over their glass 'cause they climbed up on the table. Well, that was a house rule. Not allowed to climb on the table. Or they went to smack their sister and they missed and got the glass of milk.

(Laughter)

Okay, that's a sin, okay? But, it's not a sin – I've seen – it really discourages me, too, when I see parents do this. I saw one parent, not too long ago at the store; the child was like eating a sandwich and dropped the sandwich, so the parent smacked the child. It wasn't a sin. The kid was disappointed. The kid was trying to eat the sandwich, didn't mean to drop the sandwich, but they dropped the sandwich. It's gonna happen. Humanity is not a sin. Rebellion is. So, we only discipline for sin, not for humanity.

Here are some goals of Biblical discipline. Proverbs 29:15. We're back in Proverbs. "The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother." If left to themselves, children will grow up to be foolish, immature and disgraceful. The rod, discipline, is a means by which God imparts wisdom to the child. It drives out the folly and it imparts wisdom. And so, the purposes of discipline are to drive out folly and to replace it with wisdom.

In addition, Proverbs 1:2-3 says that, "It is for attaining wisdom and discipline, for understanding words of insight, for acquiring a discipline and fruit of life, doing what is just, and right, and fair. Your ultimate goal is that your children would grow up to be people who are fruitful.

In Genesis, the purpose of children is to multiply, which is have a lot of kids, fruitfully, which means have children who are fruitful. So, the multiplication is the sheer number, and the fruitfulness is the quality of those children. Your goal is to put discipline and wisdom in your kids so that as they grow, they're fruitful. They love the Lord. They serve the Lord. They're a blessing to those around, and that they do what is just, and right, and fair. That these are the kind of people that we like having on the planet, not just 'cause they're moral, but Proverbs 1 says "Because they fear the Lord." It's – their whole life is worship. They're doing it out of love for Jesus, not just to be good kids.

The whole point of parenting is not moral, behavioral conditioning; it's children who love and fear the Lord and walk with wisdom out of a redeemed heart. It's always issues of the heart. And it says that this issue of discipline comes out of being disciplined. Being disciplined comes out of being disciplined. That's also what we see in Proverbs 29:11. "A fool gives fool then to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control." That's what Galatians 6 calls self control, which is a fruit of the Spirit.

Here's what's to happen. When a kid is little, you discipline them so that, as they grow, they get increasing freedom, and when they are older, they don't need you to discipline them because they self govern, okay? What that means is by the time a child is 16, 17, or 18, they should be able to decide, "These are my friends. This is where I work. This is how I spend my money. This is how I live my life. This is what I'm doing." Now, they should come to the parents for wisdom, and for insight, and for counsel, but as soon as a child hits 18, they're free to move out of your house. They're an adult. They got a car. They got a job, and if they're not prepared to be self governing at that point, they're gonna look like you. Foolish, right? A lot of you are young, 18 years of age, left your parents' house. Was there enormous amounts of wisdom exploding out of your heart or a lot of foolish rebellion?

What happens is when the children are little, that some of the parents say, "Oh, they're so cute." Okay? Demons are cute.

(Laughter)

They're cute. We can't discipline them. They're so cute. And when they're little, their sin's kinda cute, isn't it? "Oh, look, he's playing in the toilet. Get a camera. Isn't that cute?" No, that's not cute at all. The kids sometime sin in cute ways so that they don't get disciplined, and the parents think it's cute and sort of let it go, or even advocate it. And then, what happens is, when they hit 14, 15, 16, now the parents realize, "Uh oh, these children have no self control, no discipline." So then, it's rule time. Some of you had parents like that. They never said a word 'til you were old enough to kill someone and then it dawned on them that there was a cause and effect relationship in the world. And the way you were being raised was going to lead to enormous problems. "Oh, my gosh, they're old enough to get pregnant or get someone pregnant, to kill someone or die. We better lay down some rules to govern them." Right?

This is exactly the way – the opposite of the way it's supposed to work. Children need to learn to walk by temptation, like Adam did in the garden, and they need to learn to undergo discipline when they're young, so that when they're older, they can self govern.

My mom's an attendant secretary at a high school. My sister was at the first service. And I went there to visit them, take my sister out to lunch a couple of weeks ago, and I walk in the school. The first thing I see is a police officer with a gun in his holster, standing guard in the high school. And, you know, you ask around, and you say, "What's he doing here?" They say, "Well, these kids have no self control and so, he's our only hope at keeping anarchy at bay." Okay. It shouldn't be that way. But, if at 18, the only way to get you to be under control is to put a man with a firearm in front of you, you have not been disciplined and you have not learned self discipline. If you were governed when you were little, then you can self govern when you're older. If you have discipline when you're young, you'll be self-disciplined when you're older. If your parents force you to learn control when you're older, you'll have self control.

And that's the point of Proverbs. You discipline so that children can get more freedom. You start tight when they're little and your hands get further off as they get older, and then they become adults and you let your hands off altogether, and they have to stand before God for their life. And you speak to them. And you give them wisdom and knowledge, but they have to be self governing.

How many of you are musicians? Okay. How much discipline does it take to the place where, with your instrument, you're free?

(Laughter)

Okay. Does it take discipline to get to freedom? It does. See, when kids are little, they are learning their chords. And the goal is, when they're older, they can do jazz, right? They're free. They're free to play. They're free to experiment. They're free to explore. They're free to create. Why? Because they have discipline. If you don't have discipline, you can never have freedom. Our culture's got this so backwards. We believe that discipline is a form of bondage. And so, undisciplined people are free, but the Bible says that, "They're slaves to sin. They have no freedom at all." Discipline, Biblically, should lead to freedom.

My parents actually did a good job with this. I was 15. I got my first job. I bought my first car, drive myself to work before I had a license. I shouldn't have done that, but –

(Laughter)

– my dad sat me down and he said, "Well, son, you're a man now. You're a teenager. You have a car. You have a job. You're making money. You're gonna live your life. You're an adult. You act like a man now. You're not a little boy. If you get yourself in trouble, you're gonna have to deal with it. I'm not gonna come in and save you and rescue you. You need to walk on your own two feet. You're a man now." "Okay, great. No problem. I appreciate that." I appreciate the fact that my dad just said, "You're a man now. Walk on your own feet."

So, I go to college. I get married at 21. We start the church at 25. I'm 31 now. I look at my life and God's been gracious and there's a great number of things God has enabled me to do. I think a lot of it is because I was disciplined my dad when I was little and he said, "You're a man. Grow up." "Okay, that's great." See, we don't have a rite of passage in this culture. A lot of cultures have a rite of passage. "You're 13. You're a man now." Here, I don't know. Whenever. Whatever. There's no indication of even when adulthood and adult responsibilities kick in. And the point of discipline is parents love their kids and they want them to be free to love and serve the Lord and live a life of freedom that's self governing. You don't wanna have a kid that needs a state penitentiary to govern them. You'd rather have the Holy Spirit do that and practice self control.

A couple of other purposes of discipline, Proverbs 29:17. "Discipline your son. He will give you peace. He will bring delight to your soul." The purpose of discipline is peace. If children, especially small children, are rebellious, wild, and disobedient, is there any peace in the home? There's no peace in the home. It's just chaos ruling and reigning. The goal is peace in the home. This doesn't mean that there's no noise. If the kids are laughing

and playing, that's peaceful, right? If the kids are playing hide and go seek and find each other and shout when they're found, that's peaceful. That's – we love that. That's beautiful. When the Bible talks about peace, it's not talking about sort of this perfect home where nothing is out of place and the children just sit there with their hands folded all day. Peace means that they're loving their parents and living in peace under them, and loving the Lord and living under peace under the Lord. And that they're loving their siblings and loving at peace with them, and that this peace sort of pervades and there's joy there and life there. There should be peace. And the purpose of discipline is to get rid of the disorder. If a child is throwing tantrums, being a brat, freaking out, there's no peace in the home. No peace at all.

In addition, Proverbs 3:1-2 – I'll say this, too. This issue of peace, parents, do children have the propensity to throw their fits at home or at the grocery store? Right? Do they do it in private or in public? It's usually in public, isn't it, when they freak out? Why is that? Maximum disorder. Maximum chaos. All of a sudden, the parents have not just themselves and the child. They've got this whole institution filled with people. They've got this huge grocery store or whatever it might be, this whole mall. And children know that. They're saying, "Okay, disruption is maximum here." The hard part is they know, "They can't drop my drawers and bring the law right here in the frozen food section."

(Laughter)

So, this seems like a, you know, an opportunity for further rebellion. Maybe you pull 'em into the bathroom and the law comes down in private. I tell my kids, you know, "When we get home, there will be consequence. You can delay, but not avoid the inevitable." Kids have a propensity toward disorder because when disorder comes, does it provide them an opportunity to be sovereign? To be in control? It does. You ever seen a parent in a grocery store where the kid just flips? They're laying on the floor, kicking, screaming, and the mother's just, "Just whatever you want, tell me. I'll give it to you. Stop licking the floor. You're embarrassing me."

(Laughter)

Right? The child knows maximum disorder is an opportunity for them to usurp the authority of the parent and rule, right? Discipline drives that out. Drives that out. A couple of other things. Proverbs 3, "My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity." Is it true that when people are young, if they learn discipline, self control, loving obedience to the Lord and his Word, that as they grow, they will live longer, healthier, more fruitful enjoyable lives? It's true. "The wage for sin is death." People who sin, everything dies. Their jobs die. Their marriages die. Their relationships die. Their friendships die. Their health dies. They die. People who love the Lord and follow his wisdom, life. Jesus says, "I come to give you life, life that's abundant." Enjoyable life. What every parent wants for their kids is they want their kids to live a long, healthy life that they enjoy and is fruitful. That's what a parent wants. That's a Biblical goal. Now, the means to that ends is discipline – is the means to the ends.

It goes on as well, Proverbs 19:18, "Discipline your son for in that there is hope. Do not be a willing party to his death." You have to start when they're young. Some parents wait way too long. You have to discipline them while there's still hope, right? Let's say a kid's 18 years old, graduates from high school, has no self control, no discipline. Is that too late to start the spankings? That's too late to start the spankings. You put a 220 pound kid over your knee and grab up the wooden spoon, the implications will not be nearly as effective as when they were a year and a half. You have to start early and you have to continue with this process.

Then Proverbs 23:23-24, "Buy the truth. Do not sell it. Get wisdom, discipline and understanding. The father of a righteous man has great joy. He who has a wise son delights in him." The goal of discipline is to enjoy your kids. That's the goal. I was gone this week. I was teaching and doing some work in San Diego Thursday and Friday. I really missed my kids. Really missed 'em. I missed wrestling with my son. I missed cuddling with my daughter. I missed singing and praying over dinner. I missed being with my kids. I really did. 'Cause, usually, Friday's my day off and I'm with my kids, and I'm sitting down Friday working a whole, full, long day in San Diego, but, man, I missed my kids. Why? I enjoy my kids. My kids aren't perfect, but I enjoy them. They love me. They honor me. I'm their father. They love the Lord. They honor the Lord. He's their Father. They always say they got two daddies. And I enjoy my kids. And I hope to enjoy them more as they get older. And I hope as my sons, Calvin and Zack, get bigger, that as they become men, that I fully enjoy them as fellow men, as peers in Christ, not just my little boys anymore, you know? You should enjoy, you want to enjoy your kids. So, when you see a parent, you say, "Oh, how are your kids doing?" and they roll their eyes in the back of their head and it looks like they just ate something that was passed the pull date –

(Laughter)

– whose fault is that? Whose fault is that? That's the parents' job because that child is clay, and if they don't like what the child has become, the parent needs to say, "Well, that's what I've shaped. This is my responsibility." And you wanna enjoy your kids when they're little, and when they're older. You wanna enjoy your kids. And God, in his kindness, gives parents these certain opportunities to just stow away particular treasures of enjoyment with their kids. I tell you, my favorite thing with my daughter is we have this Christmas daddy date. I enjoy this so much. We go out. We buy her a brand new dress. She does her hair up. She's four and a half. And we go out to dinner. She loves Ray's Boathouse down on the water here. That's her favorite restaurant. So, we go out to Ray's Boat – I dress her up. We get in my car. We drive out. She's a little lady. Go in. Get our reservation. Sit down. She eats calamari, shrimp, and crab cakes.

(Laughter)

She's – I told you, there's two kinds of women, Maryanne and Ginger. She's Ginger. She's very expensive.

(Laughter)

We go out to dinner. We sit there. She sits there just like a perfect little lady, just an angel. And we sip our iced tea, and we eat our seafood, and we visit. And then, usually, what we do is afterward, we go out to tea. We go out to tea and visit. And then, we go to a play. Go out and see a play. And little daddy night and always get our photo taken, a little memory album, right? I enjoy that so much. And the issue is she's so – she's so amazingly well behaved when I get to take her on those things. Part of it is instruction like, "Sweetheart, your daddy loves you. This is a special night. Here's what we're doing. Here's where we're going. Here's how you need to act. If you don't, here's what's going to happen." Instruction, discipline, leads to an opportunity to enjoy your kids as we're eating peanut butter sandwiches as lunch, also to take them out in public and share them with people, and to enjoy them.

And the goal is not that they are perfect, but that they love the Lord, that they honor their father and mother, that they are enjoyable, and that their hearts are growing in wisdom. You wanna be able to enjoy your kids.

And some parents don't enjoy their kids and so, they're just, "Oh, thank God. We got somebody to watch 'em", you know? Parents need a break, but if the goal is that you really despise your kids and you don't wanna be with them, then there's an indication that the parenting is askew.

There are forms of discipline in the Bible as well. Some forms of discipline are passive, okay? Passive, meaning you let the kid realize that there's a cause and effect relationship wired into the world. Does God do this with us? Does, sometimes, God just let's us go do something dumb and we realize, "That was really dumb. I'm not gonna do that anymore."? Yeah. Some of us, we call that high school, right?

(Laughter)

We learn these things. Now, you gotta be careful with this. You can't let kids do this with everything, okay? You instruct, you teach, and if they blow it, you let them realize the consequence. When I was a kid, there was a few things my mom involved herself very suddenly. One of them was my dad bought us a pitching machine, and when my mom was gone one day, we ripped out her garden and we put in a batting cage in the backyard. Sunk the poles in the cement, put in net, ran cables, and plugged in our pitching machine, okay? All the women are like, (Gasp). All the men are like, "Praise the Lord." (Applause).

(Laughter)

And we plug in our pitching machine and then we realize that this thing could throw about 120 miles an hour.

(Laughter)

Now, you think of it like me. I'm about nine or ten. I got a few little brothers. Can you even imagine what a reprobate little boy's mind can do with something that throws things 120 miles an hour?

(Laughter)

Right? Well, we live under the flight path next to SeaTac airport.

(Laughter)

We popped the wheels straight up.

(Laughter)

True story. And we're like, "You know, I think we could take down a plane."

(Laughter)

That was our full plan. So, we cranked the wheels up to 120, popped the jugs pitching machine straight towards the Lord.

(Laughter)

And we're putting baseballs in this thing. Pfoof. And it just, "Wow!"

(Laughter)

And we're waiting for planes to fly over. As soon as a plane would come over our house – 'cause we're right next to the runway and we hated them 'cause they shook the windows – we felt like this was, you know, retribution and justice, like we're gonna get the planes back. So, we're launching baseballs at 120 miles an hour straight into the air over our neighborhood.

(Laughter)

Okay? Not thinking that it's gonna come down, you know?

(Laughter)

We're gonna kill someone, or go through the roof of a home, or destroy a vehicle. And my mom comes out. She's like, "What are you boys doing, really?" "Oh, man." Cause and effect. We didn't think this through. She's like, "You know, those come down." We're like –

(Laughter)

“That’s right.”

(Laughter)

“They come down.”

(Laughter)

We’re just waiting for the plane to crash into Mt. Ranier. That’s all we want out of the deal.

(Laughter)

My mom comes out. She did not – you know, my mom, at that point, was not passive in her discipline. Like, “Well, children, you’ll see. Bad things happen.” Like, “No, (Slapping hands), just the law was dropped and mom was right on it. Praise God, right? There are points where the parent’s just gotta get on it quick. It’s death. It’s real dangerous. The worst is – we gotta – well, let me tell you another one. We got a mini bike when we were little. We got an 80 and we soup it up. My brother was a good mechanic and we souped it up, so the thing would go like 60, 65 miles an hour. And it snowed, so we threw a rope on the back and got some skis.

(Laughter)

We’re flying through the neighborhood like 60 miles an hour, holding onto the rope, you know? My parents weren’t like, “Well, they’ll figure it out.” No. No. “They’re gonna die. We need to get involved immediately.”

(Laughter)

There are points where you can’t be passive in your discipline. You gotta be real active, especially if you have three boys and you live in the ghetto, okay? Just a word from practical experience.

Sometimes, this passive discipline is good, though, right? My son, Zack, is two and a half and every time I give him a bath or a shower, as soon as I put him on – I take him out and I put him on the ground, what does he do? He runs for his life, okay?

(Laughter)

I don’t know why. Every child, if they’re naked and wet, “Yes! Yes! Yes!”

(Laughter)

Just running for their life, so excited. And I don’t know why, alright? But, they do. They all do. You know, wet, nudity, “Woohoo”, off they go.

(Laughter)

And we have hardwood floors in my house, okay? I’m like, “Zac, when I take you outta the tub, don’t run. You’re soaking wet. It’s hardwood floors. I promise you, you’ll just be grease in the chute, man. You’re gonna die, okay?” Zac doesn’t believe me. Gets down and starts running, okay? I let him go. I said, “Zac you’ll see”, okay? He goes down the stairs, “Ahahahahaha.” And he goes to – he gets running and he goes to turn the corner. I just here this (Whistling). And I hear this boom, boom, boom, boom. Wham!

(Laughter)

Then I hear this, (Crying sound), “Dad!” I just go down there. “Son, do not be deceived. God will not be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. I’m telling you. Cause and effect, you see?” Now, when I take him out, he’s like just an angel. Doesn’t run for his life.

(Laughter)

Sometimes, passive discipline, providing they’re not gonna die, is okay. It’s alright. Right? “Don’t eat that whole bucket of ice cream. You’re gonna get sick. Okay, try it. You know, I told ‘ya.” Right? Sometimes, passive discipline is okay. You gotta be incremental with this. Sometimes, active discipline is necessary. And the primary use of active discipline in Proverbs is the rod. The rod. This – some of you, this was the switch. This was the wooden spoon. This was the spanking paddle. Okay, the rod is very important in Proverbs. I’ll say a few things about the rod.

First, we’ll deal with it – Proverbs 13:24. We’ll deal with this issue of the rod. And if you were abused as a child, don’t freak out. Hear me through all of this. Proverbs 13:24, “He who spares the rod”, what? “Hates his son.” Some parents say, “Well, I can’t discipline them. I love them.” Parents are supposed to feed their children. Instruct their children. Love their children. And discipline their children. If they withhold any of those things, they are hating them. Right? Discipline, according to Proverbs, is as important as food. With food, they’ll live, but without discipline, they’ll still die. So, discipline is important and withholding discipline is a form of hatred. Have you ever seen this, where there were children who did awful things just to see if their parents care? Just to see if anybody was paying attention. You’ll see some kids gradually increase their sin, wondering, “At what point will anyone pay attention and care if I live or die? Children intuitively know that if they’re not disciplined, they’re not loved.

Any of you ever coached a sports team? You see kids – I used to coach little league when I was younger, and what I found was the kids who were never disciplined, if they joined your team and you disciplined them, they loved you. They loved you 'cause they knew that you cared, and you were paying attention, and you were investing in them, and you had expectations for them to develop. You wanted them to mature. You care. How would you feel if you sinned, and sinned, and sinned, and God never said a lick about it in the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit never convicted you and there was never any consequence and God never showed up? You'd have to say, "Does God even care? Does God even love me?" Is God even participating?"

When you get convicted of your sin or the Scriptures rebuke you, or a brother or sister in Christ addresses you, you go, "Oh, that's good. I mean, it stung for a minute, like Hebrews said, but I was loved and that was good. Somebody cares about me." It says if you don't discipline your kids, you hate 'em. There's a lot of kids in our society that are hated in the parents think that they're loving them, and they're not. "But, he loves him" is what? "Careful to discipline." Careful. Okay, careful. That's a good word to keep in mind. When the rod is applied, it should be to the rear end. A child should never get smacked in the face, cuffed in the ear, pushed, shoved, hit. Never. That's not careful. It's abuse.

A child should not be beaten because the point of discipline is correction, not punishment, right? You're correcting folly; you're not punishing. And if a parent is careful, very careful – we'll get into methods of discipline – their children will know that they love them. If they're not careful, that's abuse.

In addition, Proverbs 22:15, "Folly is bound in the heart of the child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him." Children have foolish, sinful seeds of rebellion in their heart and the rod is a means by which God literally expunges it. He pushes it out so that wisdom can come instead. (Siren) Somebody who doesn't have self control is getting arrested.

Proverbs 23:13-14, "Do not withhold discipline from a child. If you punish him with a rod, he will not die." Okay, a spanking should not wound, mortally injure, kill a child. I'm not talking about that. It's a sting. It's not an abuse. They will not die. They should not die. Now, will they sound like they are dying?

(Laughter)

"Punish him with a rod and save his soul from death", okay? Okay, here's the child. Here's God and his Kingdom, and love, and joy, and peace. Here's Satan, and his hell, and his death, and his lies. The child is right here. When the child sins, which way are they going? They're running toward hell, and death, and Satan, okay? The rod is a means by which God gives the parents the opportunity to get their attention and readjust their life course. That's repentance. Turn 'em around. No more folly. Wisdom. No more death. Life. No more rebellion. Obedience. Right? No more sin. Holiness. We're gonna turn 'em around here.

In that way, the rod is important because it is the mechanism by which God turns children from hell according to Proverbs. That's where it says, if a parent says, "Well, I can't discipline my child. I love them", and they take the rod out, is that love? No, because the children's going toward sin, and death, and hell and they're gonna get, you know, themselves in this wicked life and this ensuing punishment and the rod is God's grace. It says, "Wait, turn 'em around" because a child – here's a child.

A child does not have long range thinking. A child doesn't understand that foolishness at two leads to a certain quality of life in your twenties. They don't understand that. So, what happens is the parents need to have wisdom and know that. So, what the parent says is, "Well, there's gonna be a little pain right here for a life of joy and peace", as opposed to, "A little bit of freedom here for a life of death and pain." The issue is there will be pain. The issue is, is it brief to turn 'em around or will it not occur at that moment and they'll pay for it with pain for the rest of their life? And maybe for their eternity.

Proverbs says that the rod points them; it drives them, from death. And a child knows that they're loved if their parents explain this. That's why instruction, then discipline is important. "Okay, here was your sin. Here is why I'm going to discipline you. Here is my intentions for you. Do you see that I love you?" "Okay, I see that you love me. I see that. You're driving me from death." If properly disciplined, a child should be happy. They should be happy, right?

I had this with my daughter this last week. It was so funny. I tuck her in every night. We cuddle, sing, pray, read the Bible, visit. It's daddy time, a half hour, 45 minutes, every night. And I give her three rules. "No getting out of bed. No yelling. And you gotta go to sleep." And she got in this habit of getting up because her legs really hurt. She was undergoing growing pains, okay? So, she would come up, Daddy, my legs really hurt." So, I'd get her a hot water bottle for her legs, okay? That's an acceptable reason for her to get out of bed. That's acceptable. Her legs hurt. She's got growing pains. That's not a sin. That's humanity. That's not rebellion.

But, what she learned was, "If I'm cute and have a perceived need, I get to be out of bed", right? "The heart is deceitful and wicked", Jeremiah says. My daughter, then, she's not sick or hurting, but she's trying to find a nice way to get out of bed, so she comes into my bed last week. She comes into my room. The door opens up and she's standing there looking at me very cute, very sheepishly. And I said, "Sweetheart, what's wrong?" "I love you, daddy."

(Laughter)

"I love you too, sweetheart. What do you need?" "I want to cuddle with you and watch Martha Stewart on The Cooking Channel."

(Laughter)

She loves Martha and she loves The Cooking Channel. I said, "Sweetheart, it's past your bedtime. You were supposed to go to bed. I told you, you need to stay in bed, no yelling, and you need to go to sleep." I said, "Did you break daddy's rule?" She says, "I didn't break all of them."

(Laughter)

Here's what we discipline for, then. Sin. Here's why we discipline. We're looking for repentance. We want things to change in their heart, in their ensuing life. You spank on the bottom. How many – who should spank? The parents, okay? It should be in the context of people who love them, and love the Lord, and are instructing them, and are involved. I don't want people, in general, spanking my kids 'cause they don't love them. They're not raising them, right? Here, at our church, if one of your children acts up, do we spank them? No. We come up and get you. You're the parent. You discipline, right? The Sunday school teacher's job is not to discipline. They instruct and they correct, but when it comes to discipline, that's the duty of the parents.

Some parents are very lazy and they have the siblings do the discipline. And you don't have to raise your hand, but some of you grew up in a home where, you know, there was – your parents were lazy or busy. And so, "Johnny, go get the wooden spoon and whack Suzie. She shouldn't be doing that."

(Laughter)

I've seen that where the parents will give the discipline over to one of the siblings. No. No. No, no, no. You don't wanna do that. It's the parents' duty. In addition, how many swats should a child get? It depends, doesn't it, on the severity of the action? If a child – 'cause you're trying to leave an impression. Not a physical impression, but an emotional impression.

(Laughter)

If a child, for example, isn't sharing and you give them a spanking; okay, now, what if you have, let's say, a number of children, and one of the children is very violent and deviant toward the baby? When the parents aren't looking, they're pinching the baby, or they're suffocating them, or they're hitting them? A couple of hard swats to make a strong impression because that's a critical issue. That's a very severe thing. If one of the older children were to do, you know, irreparable damage to one of the babies, that is an issue where there must be very quick, strict action.

And then, in addition, the whole goal is reconciliation; not just to punish, but to reconcile. There are different forms of methods. Here are the Godless forms of methods of parenting and discipline. Any of your parents count? Do not count, okay? If you count, I'll spank you, Okay?

(Laughter)

Do not count. Counting is awful. I mean, can you imagine if God worked that way. One guy's gonna kill another guy. God comes, "One –

(Laughter)

– two, don't pull the trigger. I'm serious. Two and a half. Two and three quarters. I'm serious. Three." The guy's sitting there with a gun and so he'd be like, "Can we just get to this? I mean, can we" – counting just teaches children to disobey and sin. And it teaches them that there's no cause and effect relationship between sin and consequence. So, they think, "Well, I sin and then something happens later." Life doesn't work that way. You sin, there's immediate consequence. God wired the world that way. There should be immediate discipline. Counting is awful. The reason that my daughter sinned against me when I told her, "Five minutes, you can cuddle with me", what was I doing? I was counting to 300. That's all I was doing. It's like, "I know you're sinning, but you don't need to obey for five minutes." Okay? Counting just – how many kids, when you put in counting, actually, it promotes obedience quicker? When you're at nine and you say, "Te and ten", then they start getting to it. Don't count. Don't count. Do not count.

Some parents nag. "Please, please, please. Would you please? What do I need?", and they're nagging. How many of your parents negotiated and rewarded. "Pick up your room." "What do I get?" "I'll give you a lollipop." "Okay." Your parents bartered with you, as if you were peers working out some sort of business transaction. You know, the 35 year old accountant and the five year old, you know, kindergarten should not be negotiating anything. What happens, then, is these are the kids who, later on in life, when they're 16, you say, "Hey, you're flunking school. You need to pick your grades up." They say, "Do I get a car?" Say, "No, you get to live. That's your reward."

(Laughter)

"Not going to kill you. You need to obey for the sake of obedience and love." Okay? Reward is terrible. What it teaches children is holiness is not the motive for obedience. That there's something better. And it makes them very, very selfish. The only reason they stop sinning is 'cause they get something, not because they're loving their neighbor, you understand that? It makes them into very selfish kids. And is that the way the world works? If you get up and go to work, do they give you a treat? Right? If you pay your taxes, do they give you a cookie? No. The way the world works is you do things 'cause they're right. Now, is it okay if the children are great, if not as the motive, but as a thanks, the parents do something nice for the kids? Sure. It's not the motive, but it might be something nice.

The other night, my kids were great for a couple of days. We had a wonderful time. It was just like this blissful few days, and it was Friday or Saturday, I can't remember what night it was, and I looked at my kids. I said, "We're gonna go to Chuck E. Cheese, okay?" 'Cause that's where the Holy Spirit is for a kid.

(Laughter)

The Holy Spirit is at Chuck E. Cheese. My kids are like, "Chuck E. Cheese! Thanks be to God!"

(Laughter)

So, they're all excited. We put 'em in the car and we go to Chuck E. Cheese and they're asking on the way there, "Daddy, how come we're going to Chuck E. Cheese?" I said, "You kids have been great the last few days and I just wanted to do something nice for you." My daughter, just the, mmmm, just the heart comes right out. She says, "If we're good tomorrow, can we go to Chuck E. Cheese again?"

(Laughter)

She immediately wants to take a grace and make it into a work. "Oh, okay, you're giving me grace. How can I earn this? What's the secret? I need to know how to get to Chuck E. Cheese every day. Tell me how to get there."

(Laughter)

The issue was no. "No, you do it because you honor your mother and father and you love the Lord, and then, sometimes, we'll give you a blessed reward. Sometimes, you just do it 'cause it's the right thing to do, okay? Now, don't get into those bad tactics."

Other forms of discipline that Scripture doesn't even talk about, so they're not necessarily good or bad, include such things as time out. Time out, for some kids, is worthless. The parents don't wanna fix or correct things. They just want peace and quiet, so they say, "You go to your room." And then the kid goes to their room, and they eat lollipops, and play videogames, and that's not punishment; that's vacation. Time out is only effective, I think, if a child is willful disobedient, and the Holy Spirit needs to convict 'em, so you need to get them isolated so that they can think through what they've done. Their conscience and the Holy Spirit can kick in.

One of our pastors, he says, when his kids were little, he'd put them on the stairs. "You sit on the stairs until you understand what you've done." And it's not just so that the child will sit there in a vacuum, but you've laid down the law, you've opened the Scriptures, you've taught the kid, and the kid is still defiant. You say, "You know, you need to sit here and I'm gonna pray for you that the Holy Spirit will convict you, and I want you to think about, you've been mean to your brother all day. And right now, you need to sit here and realize that it's a blessing to play with your brother and I'm gonna remove you from that blessing so you can understand that you have really disrupted our home today, okay?"

I don't use this hardly ever. I think I've used it once that I can remember. Ashley and Zac were just going at it, going at it, all day, all day, all day. Discipline. Discipline. Discipline. And it never really clicked how mean they were being to each other, so I just said, "You sit here. You sit here. Here's what the Bible says. I'm praying for 'ya. I want you kids to think about how bad you're being to each other. And when you come to repentance, come and tell me and we're gonna reconcile and work this out. But, there's a lot of sin here." Okay, time out, for some parents, is totally ineffective. It's something you have got to work through.

In addition, some parents, when the kids older, use grounding because when the kids are little, you can sort of control 'em. When they get older, one of their punishments is you ground them. Here's one of my problems with grounding. Discipline should be swift. Sometimes, grounding goes for months. You're not really dealing with it quickly. It's sort of bleeding out real long. In addition, if a teenager is grounded and they are home, what is their disposition? Are they happy, joyous? No, they're moping. They're angry. They're whining. They're upset. Have they brought peace into the home? No, they're just ruining the home. Not only are you punishing the teenager or whomever, you're punishing the whole family. So, to me, I don't know. I have not – grounding – I'm not saying it's a sin because the Bible doesn't say it's a sin. But, for a lot of kids, it's not very effective. They just – they keep sinning and they just do it at home. They used to be smoking weed and now they're just whining a lot. We still haven't gotten to the issues of the heart.

And Proverbs 13:1 talks about rebuking a child. When a child gets older, you may not be able to put 'em over your lap when they're 17, but, perhaps, rebuke does a good job. If you love your children, invest in them. Walk with them. Grow them. Nurture them. Encourage them. And they lie to you or they sin, and you sit them down, you look 'em in the eye, you say, "I expect more from you. I have prayed for you. I have served you. I've loved you. The Lord loves you. We've invested in you. You're being defiant. You're being disobedient. I'm very disappointed." If you have rightly built a relationship with your child, does that have any impact? It should. It should. The rebuke should, for an older child, be an enormous, enormous thing, right? And with this, as well, when you're disciplining, always make sure that the children confess their sin to the Lord and the persons that they offended. And they have to name their sin.

With Ashley, I noticed, my daughter, I would say, "Okay, go tell Zack you're sorry." "Sorry, Zack." Not pay any attention. I'll say, "Mmmm, go back. Name your sin. Apologize to Zack. Ask him for forgiveness." "Awww, I don't wanna do that." Because that takes humility to be truly repentant. "Zackie, I'm sorry. This was my sin. Will you forgive me?" Okay. Zackie will look at her and say, "I forgive you" almost every time. What do you think happens next? They hug each other and Zack kisses his sister, almost every single time. "Ashee, I forgive you. (Kissing) I love you. I forgive." He hugs her, okay? That's Biblical repentance. She names the sin. She comes looking for grace. He forgives her. They're reconciled. And there's joy.

So, what I would say is whatever your punishment methods are, you should use the rod. In addition, as you survey other particular things, first is it punitive or corrective? Proverbs 29:17, "Discipline your son. He will give you peace. He will bring delight to your soul." Is it correcting them or is it just punishing them? "I'm mad, so I'm gonna make you suffer" or is it, "I wanna redirect you because you're going foolish"? Hebrews 12:11, is it painful, right? Discipline should be painful. If a child doesn't go, "That was painful", then it doesn't count. And lastly, does it lead to repentance? "Punish him with a rod, save his soul from death." Proverbs 23:14, "Change his life course." If the discipline does not get to the matter of sin and correcting the condition of the heart and the outward obedience; if it does not lead to repentance and change; and if it is not painful, then it is not a Biblical form of discipline. Doesn't count.

Let me ask you this, parents. Why do some parents not discipline their kids? Reasons? Part of it is you don't wanna hurt their feelings, okay? Emotionally, sometimes, it's hard for mom so she says foolish things like, "When your father gets home", right? Some people make their kids into their buddies. And why else is it – why do some parents fail to discipline their kids? Sometimes, it's a lot of work. There will be certain times when every child tests every single rule you've ever made, and they'll do it for a whole day or two, or three. And you have to be on them, on them, on them, on them, on them; otherwise, you're gonna lose everything you've built. Yeah, it's – some people say, "Oh, you're mean. You're abusive. That's nasty. You shouldn't" – and there's all this social pressure. "Oh, child abuse." Well, there is child abuse.

I tell you the worse abused children are parents who don't pay any attention to them. Neglect is also a form of abuse. Discipline could take a lot of time. It takes a lot of work and consistency. It does.

There's a lot of reasons. Sometimes, parents are hypocrites and they don't feel like disciplining their kids for things they're doing. The parents are yelling at each other and the kids yell at the parents, and the parents are like, "We're doing the same thing and they're just parrots emulating us." There's a lot of reasons.

Sometimes, parents aren't even involved. They're like, "Oh, they go to daycare. The nanny takes care of 'em. We're not with our kids, so we're not involved. We're not even there to be disciplining." And if you put your kids in daycare with a nanny, are they legally even able to discipline them? No. It's against the law. They'll go to jail. So, they're down to time out, bartering, nagging, negotiating, you know? And if they're getting eight, ten hours a day with your kids, guess who's training and guess what the training is? It's definitely not Biblical. Why does discipline fail?

Here's where we'll go for a little bit. Proverbs 3:11-12. My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline. Do not resent his rebuke 'cause the Lord disciplines those he loves as the Father of the Son he delights in." Some discipline fails 'cause the parents aren't loving their kids, right? What should be with parents and kids is a lot of laughter. Joy. Fun. Arts. Crafts. Walks. Wrestling. Cuddling. Prayer. Bible study. Singing. Dancing. Fun. They – the children should enjoy their parents. The parents should enjoy their kids. And then, there should be spankings included, but if there's none of that love and enjoyment and delighting in the kids and the kids delighting in the parents, and there's just spankings all the time, it doesn't work because the love is what motivates, not just the spanking, right? It's like the dad who doesn't play with his kids and works 80 hours a week and then shows up and pulls out the spoon. It's like, "Well, who's that guy? What's he doing here? I haven't seen him all week. Every time we see him, he's mad." Love needs to precede.

Another reason discipline fails, Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers do not exasperate your children. Instead, bring them up in the training and the instruction of the Lord." Some parents, some fathers especially, get mad. Angry. Nasty. Rude. Violent. And it provokes their kids to anger. There kids just get bitter. Nasty. Mean. "I hate my dad. He's mean. He's always corrupted me. He's just yelling at me. He's screaming at me. He's smacking me around." And certain children, through that experience, get really hard, and nasty, and thick.

Colossians 3 says that some kids go the other way. "Fathers do not embitter your children or they'll become" what? "Discouraged." Some parents are harsh and they cause their kids to be mean and nasty. Other kids just collapse under that and they just get discouraged. They get sad. They get lonely. They just – they don't know how to make their parents happy. They're sad all the time, okay? And this is particularly the jurisdiction of the dad. Dads do this a lot. Like, "Yeah, I'm gonna discipline my kid." No, you're gonna pastor your kid and included in that will be discipline. In the church, do we do discipline? Sure we do, in the context of love. And instruction. And fellowship. And community. And lot of other things. As we pastor you, it includes discipline, but that's not all we do. Parents should be pastors to their kids, doing a lot of things, including discipline, but not just discipline.

In addition, here's another way that discipline fails, 1 John 5:3. "This is love for God to obey his commands and his commandments are not burdensome." Have some parents set the deck so that their children can't obey 'cause the commands are so numerous and so complicated that the kids can't remember all the rules? Okay, they come to Jesus and he, basically, summarized the Old Testament with two laws. What are they? "Love God. Love your neighbor", okay? Well, that's genius, really. The Old Testament can be very burdensome if you go through and try and remember every single law. But, if you say, "Is this loving to God and loving to my neighbor?", it takes care of most of the commandments in the Old Testament. Jesus summarizes 'em all right there. Okay, that's a good law for your kids. Is this loving to God? Is this loving to your neighbor? Throwing a fit, that's not loving to your neighbor. Stealing a toy, that's not loving to your neighbor. Dishonoring your mother, that's not loving to the Lord.

And if you're a parent, you've gotta lay down laws and instruct, but you can't get over burdensome with them. Let me ask you this. If you got a small child and you're going into someone's home, do you have to lay down some rules? Okay? Can you lay down a rule about everything? It's too much. Can you lay down some general rules like, "Don't touch anything that's not for children. Toys are okay. Everything else is off limits. If you have any questions, you come and ask me first."? Those are rules that are actually doable. They're not burdensome. Okay. "Toys and stuff I can play with. Nothing else I'm allowed to pull down and work on. And if I have any questions as to what is what, go ask mom or dad." Not burdensome. Very clear.

Some parents aren't clear and their kids don't obey 'cause their kids don't know. I'll tell 'ya, the next one, too, I think is important. Matthew 6, Jesus says, "Lead us not into temptation." Some parents lead their kids into sin. Let me ask you this. If you keep a kid up late, late, late at night, way, way, way past their bedtime and they get fussy, should you spank 'em for it? No, you've led 'em into temptation. They're exhausted. If you're out running errands all day and you forgot to pack some snacks and the kids are starving to death, have you led them into temptation? Sure. They're hungry. You don't spank for hunger, right? You don't spank for fatigue. Now, out of that can come sin, but the parent needs to say, "I led 'em into temptation." If you go – let's say you go to the supermarket and you don't tell 'em the rules before you let 'em out of the cart, are you leading them into temptation? Sure.

I saw a parent do it at the grocery store recently. The mom let the kid out of the cart and she'd say, "Oh, okay, go get that and put it in the cart. Go get

that and put it in the cart.” And then, she’d go get something and put it in the cart. And then the child would go get something else off the shelf that she hadn’t instructed and put it in the cart, and she whacked him. And the kid’s looking at her like, “I thought we were putting stuff in the cart.”

(Laughter)

Right? There should have been a non-burdensome rule for the child laid down. “Only put things in the cart that mommy tells you to put in the cart.” The child doesn’t know. The child’s like, “Well, we’re putting stuff in the cart.”

(Laughter)

They’re leading the child into temptation by not instructing clearly, okay?

James 1:20 says, “Man’s anger does not bring about the righteousness that God desires.” When you’re disciplining, should you raise your voice? No. Should you be visibly angry? You can be displeased, but not angry. Can you threaten? Can you intimidate? No. Okay? The tone for the discipline should be the same as if you were studying the Scriptures with a child. It’s just another form of instruction. When you’re studying the Bible, you should say, “Okay, this is what the Lord says. This is what we do. This is how the world works.” It should be the same tone for the discipline. “This is what the Lord says. You’ve disobeyed. Here’s what’s going to happen. Please come here.” It’s just another form of instruction and it should sound and look the same as if you were studying the Scriptures with a child. Shouldn’t be different.

Here’s another reason discipline often fails. “Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction. Do not forsake your mother’s teaching.” Proverbs 1:8. Sometimes, mom and dad just are not unified in their instruction, so the kid gets really confused because all day mom says, “Don’t do this. Don’t do this. Don’t do this.” Dad comes home, tries to be the cool one, and then let’s the kids jump on the couch because he wants to be the cool one, okay? Then you don’t spank the kids for disobeying mom’s rules. Mom and dad need to get themselves unified before they go around disciplining kids because the parents – you can imagine, if you had two Bibles and one said, “Don’t steal”, and the other said, “Steal”; and one said, “Don’t lie”, and the other said, “Lie”, and God came and spanked you because you either lied or didn’t lie. That would be very difficult to be obedient, okay? The parents need to sing the same song. I always say, “One gun, two barrels.” That’s the way the parents should work. Should be nice, and clear, and unified.

Romans 2:4 says, as well, that “God’s” what “leads us to repentance”? His kindness. One of your greatest weapons for discipline is kindness. Kindness. I’ll give you an illustration. My daughter, a few weeks ago, she was disobeying all day. She was very mouthy, right? And she was grumbling and whining. Let me ask you this. Is grumbling and whining a sin? It is. Why did Israel wander for 40 years? Whining and grumbling, okay? It’s a sin. God’s a Father who’s like, “Ughh, my kids. They just won’t stop whining. Forty years.” If you don’t deal with ‘em when they’re young, how long will they whine and grumble? Forty years. Yeah.

(Laughter)

Forty years. Whining and grumbling. I discipline her. Discipline her. Discipline her. Man, nothing was cracking her. I, finally, I said, “Ashley”, I opened the Bible. I walked with her through this. I said, “You gotta honor your father”, you know? I talked to her about her speech from Proverbs. I laid this all out. I said, “Honey, I have to discipline you now.” I said, “Again. You’ve been doing this all day.” I said, “Okay, come here. Sit on my lap.” She says, “Okay, dad.” She sits on my lap. I could tell, she’s still kind of defiant. So, what I do is I put my hand over her buns. I said, “Okay, I’m gonna spank you now.” And her – okay, and it all crunches up. Rear end just shrinks down to nothing, and I put my hand right over buns and I went, (Slapping). I spanked my hand instead of her rear. She looked at me. She says, “That didn’t hurt.” And I said, “Do you know why?” She said, “No.” I said, “I didn’t spank you.” She says, “Why?” I said, “I love you and I forgive you, but you’ve been sinful all day.” And she just started bawling. Just started bawling. Sometimes, mercy melts the heart.

How many of you, you’ve been sinning, sinning, sinning, sinning, sinning, and God killed you with kindness? He was nice and he broke you? The Puritans always say that the same sun that bakes the clay also melts the ice, right? If your child’s heart is hard, discipline may further harden it. If your child’s heart is soft, it may melt it. And if they become defiant and hard hearted, some way the only way to melt it is with mercy. Mercy. Sometimes. You don’t use mercy all the time; otherwise, they’ll sin like crazy. They’ll assume that grace will abound. But, sometimes, mercy is one of the forms of discipline. Grace, sometimes, breaks a child’s rebellion. God has broken us with kindness and mercy.

Lastly, what should happen after a child is disciplined? You see this in the parable of the prodigal son. He sins. He rebels. He runs. The father embraces him. Loves him. Forgives him. Parties. Celebration. Joy. After a child sins, you should not – after they’ve been disciplined, you should not talk about it. It should not be brought up. You should not hang it over their head. It should be gone and forgotten and you should love them. They should be held, prayed for, kissed. There should be singing, dancing. It should be celebration. Reconciliation’s the whole point. That’s the point of all discipline, including church discipline at the end of Galatians 6. The point is repentance and bringing back and celebrating life together.

What do you do if you’re failing? I’ll give you the last few things. One, look at your life and ask yourself, if you’re a parent, “Am I a total hypocrite? I had a woman come to me recently. She said, “My son doesn’t listen to a word I say. He’s wild and disobedient, and defiant.” I said, “Well, that’s because he’s just like his mother. I’ve told you what to do with that boy for years and you’ve never listened. He’s just like you. That’s why he’s driving you crazy.” It’s like someone with a foul mouth and a parrot trying to ask, “How do I fix that parrot?”

(Laughter)

Well, it has very little to do with the parrot. This would be your responsibility. You have to look at yourself and say, “Am I obeying God’s Word? Am I submitting to the Lord’s discipline? Am I walking in wisdom? If not, I have to do plank spec. issues and get my house in order.”

Two, study the Bible, study the Bible, study the Bible, especially Proverbs. And James 1:5 says, "Ask God for wisdom." Study the Bible and ask for wisdom. Befriend good parents. Proverbs says that, "He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers much harm." If you see people that are good parents and you wanna be a good parent, get to know them. If you're single, it's the perfect time to get to know them, before you have kids.

In addition, you can pray over your children that the Holy Spirit would convict them. If they're having a hard time being convicted and seeing their sin, the Holy Spirit is beautifully capable of that ministry. Persevere 'til change comes.

And lastly, I'll give you this example out of Job 1:5. Job's kids throw parties. He's thinking, "Perhaps, my children have sinned in their heart and cursed the Lord." So, what Job does is he then confesses their sins before the Lord and asks for forgiveness for them. If your children are unrepentant, you can still repent of the sins of your children. That's how children learn to repent of sin. Their parents do it for them.

I'll give you an example. Some months ago Zac, just all day, completely defiant and he would not – I could not get him to be obedient. He was just going nuts. So, I brought him upstairs, isolated him. I was holding him. He was thrashing, and kicking, and screaming, and I laid down on the bed, and I just held him until he calmed down, and I just started praying for him. I asked that the Holy Spirit would convict him of his sin, that I was worried about the condition of his heart. That he was breaking commandments by dishonoring his father and his mother. And then, I started listing all the sins that I had been disciplining him for that day that he was unrepentant of. "Lord God, here is his sin. Please forgive him. Here is his sin. Please forgive him. I'm his father. I'm interceding now. I'm bringing these things before you." And it was amazing. Zac absolutely broke. It hit him that this wasn't him just testing his strength against me, but that he was implicating me before the Lord. And he broke. And he just started heaving and sobbing. And he's on my chest literally just going up and down, just bawling. He got the whole front of my shirt soaking wet. And he looked at me and he just says, "Daddy, I'm sorry." And I kissed him. I said, "Zackie, I love you and I forgive you, and the Lord forgives you." I said, "But, we have to watch your heart, okay?" Sometimes, repentance for your children is what leads them to repentance. Sometimes.

I'll turn this. At this point in our service, we always respond. You say, "What does this got to do with anything?" This has everything to do with everything 'cause God's our heavenly what? Dad. He's our Father, right? We'll respond with communion, which is confessing our sins. Coming, remembering Jesus died for our sins, rose to conquer enemies of sin and death. Put a new heart in us. Have us adopted into the family of God, as God is our Father. And we, as brothers and sisters, who need to treat each other well because we are a family.

And, as well, what I need to do this morning is I need to introduce the new baby. That's what I wrote down in my notes. Let me see Henry. You guys get to meet Henry. Henry is awesome. You can pray for him. He's a little skinny.

(Laughter)

Look at this guy. Those are some of the nicest chins I've ever seen.

(Laughter)

(Kissing) And this is Mike and Trisha. They are wonderful, wonderful people. We love 'em. They're a great blessing in this church. How old is he now?

Response: Seven weeks.

Seven weeks. He's the same age as my son, except for he's about twice the size. Hey, Henry. Good boy. Isn't he cute? He's a good boy. Mike is a very Godly man and Trisha's a very Godly woman. We love them very much. Any of you who know them, you know that. What we do with the children, we introduce them to you guys. You can meet them, pray for them, and pray for the parents because, in addition to the parents, we're part of that larger shaping community that prays, and loves, and involves ourselves in the kid's life. So, Mike and Trisha, do you covenant with us to love this little boy and pray over him, deal with matters of the heart and seek to have him come to Christ early and love him long?

Response: Yes.

Okay. You, as a church, agree with them to pray for him, to love him, to encourage them as parents, and to see him walk in the faith of his mom and dad?

Response: Amen.

Father God, we love 'ya and we thank you that we are your children, that you've adopted us into your family, that you are our dad. That you're a dad who is perfectly aware of our condition, that you have involved yourself in our life, that you have continually sought to forgive us through Jesus' death, burial and resurrection; and transform us through repentance so that we would be different. We pray the same thing for this little boy, Lord God, that through his parents, he would not only honor his father, but his Heavenly Father. And that he would love his mom. And that he would love the Word of God. We pray that the Spirit would dwell in his heart and that he would be a man committed to the purposes of the Gospel. And Lord God, we pray that this family would walk with much wisdom as they instruct, and lead, and guide, and discipline him. God, we pray that as a young man he would learn discipline so that, as he is older, he can self govern and that he would be able to go out and live his life for the glory of the Gospel, not bound to sin, and death, and folly.

Lord God, we love you and we thank you for the blessing of kids. And we love this little guy, Henry. We give him to you, in Christ's name. Amen.

(Kissing). Thanks, buddy. Good boy. Right on. Cool. You bet.

I'll pray. We'll take communion and our offering.

Father God, thank you for a chance to study your Word. I thank you for patient people who hear me ramble for well over an hour every single week. Lord God, I thank you as well that the Scriptures are so intensely practical, that it's not just about things that live up in the sky; but, it's about life and practical things like money, and children, and friends, and family, and jobs, and health.

God, we thank you for all the children that have been born and will be born in this church. Thank you for the over ten women that are pregnant right now that attend this church. God, it's our prayer with all these kids coming that we would do whatever we can to be obedient to the Scriptures and to raise them as families in this church. God, we thank you, as well, that you're our Father, that you discipline us, that you deal with our sin and that you are not content to leave us as we are.

Thank you, Jesus, that you are alive, you're here, that you've loved us, and that you are continually instructing us through your Word and the Spirit. Amen.