

Spare The Rod?

"Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him." (Proverbs 13:24, ESV)

Dear parent, lovest thou thy children? Neglect not to discipline them. The proverbist asserts: one who refuses to apply discipline, the rod, at the right time and in the right manner acts for hate instead of love. Refusing discipline is refusing to keep the child on the right narrow road of truth. When one leaves this path and begins to wander, it could cost them their life, like a child walking away from a parent into a busy intersection. Yet, not all discipline is properly implemented. Some have gone too far and disciplined a child when hot-headed and gone too far. The following are five scriptural principles to consider when implementing discipline:

1. Discipline should be appropriate to circumstances. The discipline that is dealt should somehow relate to the need at hand. It does no good to discipline in such a manner as to confuse the child. God's discipline in scripture always somehow relates to the violation or breach of faith committed by his people so that they would learn from their experience.

2. Discipline should be well measured. The best discipline is in correct amount. Too much may discourage a child, too little will not press the point home. Parents are instructed not to provoke their children to wrath, but to mind the instruction of Yahweh and pour out the right amount. (Eph. 6:4)

3. Discipline should be timely. Like a tomato patch planted in a winter field is the discipline which misses the mark by weeks, days, or hours. God disciplines his people immediately in some instances and waits patiently in others. Circumstances will help one determine which is appropriate.

4. Discipline should include comforting. As Eliphaz the Temanite correctly noted, "Behold, blessed is the one whom God reproves; therefore despise not the discipline of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he binds up; he shatters, but his hands heal." (Job 5:17-18) When we are disciplined by Yahweh God, it is Yahweh God with whom we make peace first and foremost. Let us comfort those who are disciplined by our hands as well. (1 Cor. 5:1ff; 2 Cor. 2:7) The purpose of discipline is not simply to wound but to eventually bring about healing. A surgeon makes an incision, wounding the patient, but removes the malignant tumor which could have cost the patient her life.

5. Discipline should be actively pursued. "For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." (2 Tim. 1:7) We do no one a favor by neglecting discipline. Let us commit ourselves to carrying it out in truth and love.

One last note: We are all children of God. We are commanded to collectively judge sin and to discipline brethren for their own good. (Mat. 18:15-20) Let us follow these principles at that time also.