

Five Smooth Stones Of Parenting

Introduction. In Goliath, David faced what seemed an unbeatable foe. David's goal was not so much to kill the giant as to protect the Israelites and the honor of God. He took five smooth stones from the brook to achieve his purpose (1 Samuel 17:40). The result was victory against insurmountable odds.

In the pervasive humanism of our society, parents face what appears to be an equally unconquerable giant who is determined to destroy our children. The philosophy advocates that man is the measure of everything, and it removes the moral and ethical standard of right and wrong. However, godly parents possess five stones with which to protect their children.

I. **Purpose**

- A. Proverbs 29:15 says "... a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." Consequently, wisdom tells us to train our children (Proverbs 22:6). This requires first determining "the way he should go," then pointing the child in that direction. For Christians one direction supersedes all others: eternal life in heaven via obedience to Christ on earth (Matthew 7:13-14; Romans 8:29). This demands parents to live out these principles of self-denial and sacrifice (Mark 8:34; Romans 12:1-2).
- B. Scores of agencies with different goals challenge us for control of our children. I have heard faithful Christians say, "I will not let public schools take my children away from me." Today there are many additional threats: TV, Internet, video games, iPhones, iPads, school activities, sports, friends, etc. These must be constantly monitored and controlled. Parents of good children are often told, "You are just lucky." No, good children are not the product of luck, but of purpose -- relentlessly, sacrificially, and pro-actively pursued.

II. **Training**

- A. The "nurture" of the Lord is discipline and chastening, generally by deed (Ephesians 6:4). Training a plant requires knowing where you want it to go and then patiently bending, pruning, and tying it. Training an animal involves knowing what you want it to do, using force at first, then patiently guiding, correcting, and then rewarding and punishing. In both instances, training means establishing authority and maintaining control.
- B. Training children begins with example and sometimes physical force, then guidance and correction. The Bible explains that corporal punishment is wise and necessary (Deuteronomy 21:18-21; cp. Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15). Most young people

want their parents to be strict. They want parents who are consistent and fair in doling out discipline. Children need the security of specific boundaries, and they need to know there are consequences for going over the line (Hebrews 12:11).

- C. This means establishing the parents' authority and letting the child know who is in control. This must begin very early. Once willful rebellion is tolerated, a wrong direction is established and "bending, pruning, and tying" become all the more difficult. John Wesley's mother described discipline as "shaping the will without breaking the spirit." This agrees with the Spirit's counsel of not exasperating, provoking or stirring wrath, or making children bitter (Ephesians 6:4). This discourages them (Colossians 3:21).

III. **Instruction**

- A. "Admonition" is instruction in correct behavior, generally by word (Ephesians 6:4). Unlike plants and animals, children can be admonished and instructed. But the very intellect that enables children to be instructed also enables them to exercise their free will as they grow older. As the child ages, parental control gradually diminishes, and unless God's control is established, their lives will be out of control (cp. Psalm 119:9, 11). God's control is established by teaching them the scriptures (Psalm 40:9-10; Matthew 12:35; cp. Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 20; Psalm 78:4-6).
- B. Long after Timothy was beyond the control of his mother and grandmother, their faith resided in him (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). Faith in older children is the result of early instruction in righteousness. Parents should take advantage of the classes offered by the church, but this is not enough -- they must teach their children personally. A mother once spoke of overhearing her husband saying to their young infant in the crib, "Let me tell you about Jesus." Not surprisingly, that young infant is now a godly young teenager.

IV. **Affection**

- A. Without love, Paul said that he had "become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1). Without discipline and instruction administered with love, children, at best, will view parents in the same way.
- B. Love "suffereth long and is kind," and "behave(s) itself unseemly," and above all, "seeketh not her own" (1 Corinthians 13:4-5). Love keeps punishment from getting out of hand and focuses on the ultimate goal of correction.
- C. Affection without firmness is disastrous, but equally disastrous is firmness without affection (cp. 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8; Genesis 25:28;

37:3). Punishment is certainly not the only motivator for obedience -- love is the noblest one (Proverbs 3:12).

V. **Prayer**

- A. David did not attribute his victory over Goliath to the stone, his sling, or his skill. "The battle," he said, "is the Lord's" (1 Samuel 17:47). So it is with the training of our children. God is concerned with the outcome and we are servants with whom He has entrusted our little ones (Genesis 4:1; Psalm 113:9).
- B. Hannah prayed for the blessing of the child Samuel (1 Samuel 1:9-11; 2:1-10), so it would hardly be inappropriate to pray for raising children. We must pray daily for the wisdom that He has promised to supply (James 1:5), and for the self-control to make wise decisions (1 Corinthians 9:25). Finally, when our children have become what we hoped for, we have no ground for boasting; we can only humbly exclaim, "To God be the glory" (Jeremiah 9:23-24; 1 Corinthians 1:31).

Conclusion. David succeeded using only one stone; parents will need all five. Hopefully, they will reach the "target" of our children's hearts. God was the finest "parent" with a heart full of love for His children (Hosea 11:1; Malachi 1:2), but His children still rebelled (Isaiah 1:3). When children depart for the turbulent waters of sin, pray that their earlier instruction will be brought back into their mind, with repentance as the result.