

# Should I Spank My Child?

**Introduction.** Thirty years ago, a majority of parents believed Proverbs 22:15 to be true. Today's parents, for at least three reasons, have rejected this wisdom. First, psychologists, beginning with Dr. Spock in the 1960's, have persuaded American parents to exchange biblical teaching about discipline for a "do as you please" secular humanism. These advisors told parents to not inhibit their children while they "find themselves." Therefore, many parents have taken a "hands off" attitude to discipline. Second, parents have been taught or have developed a false sense of love. Some think, "I love my children too much to spank them." This sense of false love has soothed the conscience of permissive parents, but has done little to bring peace and happiness to the home. Often, in public places, or where children are playing together, one can see the difference between a child who has been disciplined and one who has not. Third, child abuse has become more prevalent in our society in the last several years. Anti-spanking advocates try to associate child abuse with loving parents disciplining their children. They fail to discern that the increase in child abuse started to rise simultaneously with the introduction of their permissive philosophy over three decades ago.

While spanking may remain controversial to many in our society, those who accept the Bible will have no problem with it. Deuteronomy 1:39 says that children know neither good or bad. The parents' job is to raise them properly (Ephesians 6:4). Part of this involves spanking or the "rod," and we are going to investigate why this is good.

## I. ***What Does The Bible Say About Using The Rod?***

- A. Can we prevent the rod from being used in the first place?
  1. As recently as 2007, studies showed that children were less likely to exhibit behavioral problems at school if either of their parents (particularly their mothers) attended religious services than children whose parents did not attend religious services at all.
  2. Also, parents' discussions with their children about religion was related to a decrease in the likelihood that their children would exhibit problem behavior in school. Likewise, children whose parents both attended church frequently tended to exhibit higher levels of self control.
- B. Characteristics of the rod.
  1. It can be a prompt demonstration of love (Proverbs 13:24; cf. Hebrews 12:8).
  2. It cannot be destructive to the child (Proverbs 19:18).

3. It is constructive to the child (Proverbs 22:15).
  - a) For this reason the child must learn to willingly submit to the spanking. Twisting, kicking, and yelling does not show submission.
  - b) A child must understand early in life that the spanking is prolonged when there is not submission.
4. It is commanded by God (Proverbs 23:13).
  - a) Note that correction and the rod are connected. The rod enforces correction.
  - b) Submission is required. Parents must win this battle, and it is far better to win when the child is young.
5. It can benefit the child spiritually (Proverbs 23:14; Hebrews 12:11).
6. It can lead to wisdom (Proverbs 29:15a).
7. It is shameful to neglect it (Proverbs 29:15b).
8. It can increase the joy of being a parent (Proverbs 29:17).
9. It is a characteristic of God's dealings with man (Hebrews 12:6).
- C. All of this makes it abundantly clear that the Bible teaches there is a place for the physical discipline of children in proper parenting.
  1. Cars often come with an "Owners Manual." In it, the manufacturer details the features and recommends proper care. We pay attention to it because we know the maker of that automobile knows what is required to keep it running efficiently.
  2. Likewise, God is our "Maker," our Creator. He knows what is best for man. Accordingly, in His "Guide Book," the Bible, He has given us instructions on the nurturing, instruction, and disciplining of children. God is a God of discipline; He is also a God of love (Deuteronomy 28:15; 23:5; Romans 11:22).
- D. Not all discipline involves a spanking. In fact, when loving nurturing and instruction is consistently applied, spankings may be a minor part of discipline (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 78:5-7; 2 Timothy 3:15). It will vary from case to case, but if spankings are taken out of the disciplinary process, harm will be done and evil effects will surely follow.

## II. ***Answering Arguments Against Spanking***

- A. Several seemingly strong arguments are made against spanking.
  1. Spanking is said to be "beating" and "abuse" (Proverbs 19:18; 20:30).
    - a) Painful remedies such as surgery are sometimes necessary to cure bodily ailments. Likewise, evil in man can demand severe remedies. No one accuses doctors of abuse when they cut someone open to remove an infection or tumor.

- b) The problem is, many in our society would rather justify wrong doing in a child or ignore it rather than correct it. God obviously sees wrong doing as a reason for what some might consider drastic action.
- 2. Spanking is said to be "too rampant" (Proverbs 13:24).
- 3. Spanking is said to breed violent children (Proverbs 22:15; Hebrews 12:11).
- 4. Spanking is said to only work temporarily (Proverbs 23:13-14; 29:17).
- 5. Spanking is said to be the wrong role model for children and will hurt development (Proverbs 3:11-12; 29:15).
- B. In light of all this, it is distressing to see some Christians taking worldly advice over the truth of God's word. They have read the verses, but the question is, "Who do they believe?" God or the so-called "learned people" in our society making the arguments we have reviewed under this point?

### III. ***Guarding Against Child Abuse***

- A. In seeking to give an answer to the previous arguments are we sanctioning all that is done in the name of discipline? Certainly not. God has helped many people with His methods of discipline. We know that man is not perfect in his application of God's methods. Abuse is possible. We do not believe in child abuse anymore than those who argue against spanking. What will keep Christian parents from it?
- B. Parents want to make sure that they do not provoke or discourage their children (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21). They can do this by two extremes.
  - 1. First, parents can have a lack of standards. 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. When a child comments that "Mom and Dad don't care what I do," they are not saying that out of respect!
  - 2. Second, parents can discipline excessively. Parents who abuse their children either verbally, emotionally, or physically will greatly discourage them. Parents often make statements to their children that they would never make to anyone else. Parents who react in rage, losing their temper, show themselves to be just as troubled as their children. Why would a child listen and heed counsel from someone like this?
- C. Questions to ask before you spank.
  - 1. Why are you spanking them? Is it out of anger or in an attempt to shape behavior?

2. What do you want them to learn from this? Do you have a conscious objective?
  3. Have you given them positive reinforcement for balance? Do they see your love?
  4. Do they understand your expectations of them? Have you talked with them enough?
  5. Are you dealing with them in a Christ-like manner? Are you helping them to go to heaven?
- D. God's people should take care not to wield it carelessly. There are times when parents should not use the rod.
1. Children should not be spanked for childishness or awkwardness.
    - a) Parents should understand the difference between what a child is "not able to do" and what he "won't do." An unintentional accident is not a reason to spank.
    - b) However, if the child has been warned to calm down and he disregards the warning, which results in an "accident," that is different.
  2. Children should not be spanked for legitimate forgetfulness.
    - a) Perhaps a child has new chore to perform and unexpected company drops in, disrupting the normal pattern of work in the home.
    - b) Parents must make a difference between "faultless" and "blameless" behavior. A child's behavior may not be faultless in action but can be blameless in motive.
  3. Children should not be spanked for a lack of ability.
  4. Children should not be spanked when you have incomplete information.
  5. Children should not be spanked while the parent is angry.
    - a) Our children deserve to see the example of people whose lives have been transformed by Jesus Christ (Romans 12:1-2), thus possessing the essential qualities of meekness and gentleness.
    - b) Rather than demonstrating a life filled with anger and hot tempers, we need to show a life of self-control (1 Corinthians 9:27). During troubled times, children need parents who will remain calm and help them still the turbulent waters.
- E. Parents who use the rod correctly and consistently will eventually use it less and less. Parents who are inconsistent in their use of the rod can influence their children to look for what they can get away with.

**Conclusion.** It is not always easy to accept or provide discipline. But a failure to discipline is far more bitter, troublesome, shameful, and heart-breaking. Parents, listen to God and your children and provide them with loving, consistent, and fair discipline. When they need punishment, dish it

out. Let them know why what they did was wrong. But also let them know that you love them, even when they let you down.

Spanking is only one part of the training and discipline process. It is only one tool in a parent's toolbox. It will achieve positive results when used properly in a loving environment. Endeavor to bring the laws of the Lord to the minds of your children. Instill in them the love for God that produces obedience and the fear of sinning that produces righteousness.