

Children

I should preface this lesson by saying that I do not have any children; in fact, by some definitions I still am a child. So I cannot offer you much personal experience here; but that's alright since you're here to learn what the Bible says, and that I can help you with in...

LESSON 41: CHILDREN

George Orwell once made the insightful comment, "each generation imagines itself to be more intelligent than the one that went before it, and wiser than the one that comes after it". Every generation, no doubt since Adam, has considered itself the pinnacle of human development; we spend most of our lives thinking our parents are fools, our great-grandparents were savages, and our children are idiots. Of course, we aren't always wrong.

Parents assume they are always right because they are older, more experienced, have suffered more, and simply because they're older (it's worth saying twice). Children assume their parents are always wrong because they don't understand the current problems their generation faces; parents tend to give dogmatic advice based on 30-year-old experiences. The fact is, both *are* wrong quite a lot. Often at the same time.

Are the older people necessarily wise? **Job 32:9**. Are your elders always more righteous, better skilled in understanding the judgment of God? **Jeremiah 5:5**. Is it better to be a sincere child than a foolish old person? **Ecclesiastes 4:13**. Who takes away the understanding of the aged? **Job 12:20**. To whom does God reveal truth? **Matthew 11:25**. Why? **1 Corinthians 1:26-29**. Did God specifically prophesy that in our time there would be a great scarcity of wise old men and women? **Isaiah 3:1-4**. Why? **Verses 8-12**.

As people age, they begin to develop the opinion that they are automatically right when arguing with anyone younger because "when you're *my* age you'll understand!" This is a wonderful tactic because it is impossible to disprove, for no one younger will EVER be "your age" (until after you're dead, at which point you'll no longer care). Did Paul command Timothy not to let old people use the "when you're MY age..." argument against him? **1 Timothy 4:12**.

Being older doesn't make you right. Having suffered more doesn't make you right. Having accomplished more doesn't make you right – although at least that lends *some* weight to your words. But no matter what you have done, or how old you are, **you are only right if you are right**.

A true Christian argues with REASON and TRUTH, not with age, titles, accomplishments, or authority. That's the whole point of meekness and arrogance as you studied in Lesson 34. Yet all parents pretty much have the attitude that their age makes them automatically right – no matter how old they or their children get. And age doesn't make you right. It *ought to*, **but it very seldom does in real life**.

Did the Pharisees use their ages as an argument against Jesus? **John 8:57**. Did they use their authority and position to dismiss the testimony of the man Jesus healed? **John 9:26-34**. Did the king use his authority to “prove” he was right? **2 Chronicles 25:16**. Can you teach people who believe they are always right? **Proverbs 26:12**. Do such people even take this attitude with God? **Isaiah 65:5**. What will be the end of such people? **Luke 18:17**.

Children do not say, “when *I* was your age...” in nearly every sentence. Children do not say, “when you’re *my* age you’ll see I’m right” after you’ve presented them with an argument they cannot answer. That’s not all Jesus meant by that statement, but it’s what we need for this topic. Anyone who uses that sort of argument is not receiving the truth “as a little child”, and thus, will not be in the kingdom. Not without repentance, at least.

WHAT MOTIVATES US

Before we can really get into the details on how to raise children, you have to understand what motivates them. The world’s psychology treats children as separate creatures, misunderstood little angels who just need to be “loved” into behaving properly. But the fact is, children are just miniature versions of you that don’t talk so good. **Understand yourself, and you will understand your children. Remember how YOU learned not to sin, and you will know how to teach your children not to sin.**

You see parents everywhere trying to plead with their children to be good, telling them “that’s not nice” or “other people don’t like it when you do that”. It is sheerest idiocy to expect a child to behave better after such an argument **because children don’t care if they’re nice!**

Did *you* learn that sin was bad by God telling you “it’s not nice to kill people”, and “people don’t like it when you steal from them”? Is that how YOU learned? Were *you* such a good person by nature that God merely had to explain to you that you were harming other people to get you to stop? Seriously?? **Then why do you expect such enlightenment from your 2-year-old?**

Modern ideas about raising children are all based on the grossly incorrect principle that people, particularly children, are inherently good. Is that what the Bible says? **Jeremiah 17:9**. Do they have a sinful spirit from birth? **Psalms 51:5**. David was not born out of wedlock; he was not born as a *result of sin*, **but with a spirit in him that was inclined to be sinful** – it “lusted to envy” as we all do (**James 4:5**).

Children are not born wicked – or good. They are simply born selfish. They have no desire to hurt anyone – on the other hand, **they don’t really care** if they do, either. From the moment they open their eyes they seek only their own good; they want to be fed, they want to be warm, they want to be entertained. Those desires are not wrong, *provided* they are not willing to harm others to satisfy them.

But of course they are. A child will walk all over his siblings and his parents and anyone else in his way to get what he wants. He is motivated by self-interest and *nothing else*. Like adults, children don’t like pain or discomfort or boredom. They want to be accepted and appreciated.

As they grow, they develop more complicated desires, but they are all rooted in one of those motives. And it is through giving or withholding these things that their hearts can be educated in the law of God. Young children have very receptive minds, and quickly mold themselves after the values they see around them (**Proverbs 22:6**).

And it is not nearly so difficult to teach children the law as you might think. Because – until corrupted by bad examples and misteachings – every creature on Earth understands the law of God perfectly from birth.

EVERYTHING KNOWS THE LAW OF GOD

Every creature that breathes understands the law of God. Watch what happens when one cat eats out of another cat's plate. Watch what happens when a wolf makes a pass at another wolf's mate. Watch birds fighting over "their" birdseed. Or fish defending "their" territory in an aquarium. They *all* know it is wrong to steal. It is wrong to commit adultery. It is wrong for you to kill them – and they will violently object if anything tries to break these laws.

Likewise, children understand the law of God inherently from birth. Try taking away their toys; try pinching them; the proverbial "taking candy from a baby" is *not* as easy as it's made to seem. Children KNOW these things are wrong and they don't like it when you break the law of God! Children don't LIKE it when you lie to them or break your promises – they KNOW that's wrong!

So as I said, they understand the law of God perfectly *but only as it applies to other creatures!* That is the key! Every living creature alive, from *the* ant to *your* aunt, wants you to treat it according to the law of God! And if you don't, they will bitterly resent it!

But not one of them will apply that law TO THEMSELVES! Knowing that he would not want HIS food stolen, a cat gleefully tries to steal the food from his friend. Knowing that he would not want to be lied to, a child glibly lies to you. Just as, knowing you would not want it done to you, a part of you still wants to commit adultery.

Jesus reduced the entire Bible and every law contained in it to one simple principle in **Matthew 7:12**. He said this because **EVERYONE knows how THEY want to be treated by others! And the entire Bible is consumed with getting them to treat OTHERS that same way!**

The point of this is, creatures – adults, children, or animals – do not NEED you to teach them that what they are doing is wrong! They do not NEED you to tell them that it makes other people sad if you lie to them, or that yelling makes it hard for other people to talk. **They don't need to KNOW what the law is... they need a REASON to care!**

A REASON TO CARE

The problem is very seldom that your child does not *understand* sin, he simply *doesn't care*. When he doesn't care, **explaining it to him again won't help**. Explaining that "it isn't nice to kick other people" will have no impact *because he doesn't care how other people feel!* He is selfish!

You cannot use arguments based in unselfish ideals to make a selfish person considerate! If he CARED what the other person felt, he wouldn't have hurt them in the first place! As I travel around the world, I hear parents try to reason with rebellious children a dozen times a day, trying to make a child who thinks only of himself care about others by explaining to him that what he did "wasn't nice".

You cannot correct the problem that way; and spending ten minutes with almost any American child will amply prove my point – that this approach *hasn't* solved the problem. When a creature of any age is selfish, what is the BEGINNING of righteousness? **Proverbs 1:7**.

Do children NEED to learn this “fear of the Lord”? **Psalms 34:11**. [Granting that is a metaphor, God’s metaphors *always* apply literally as well as metaphorically.] So it is fear of authority that is the beginning of wisdom. And that fear cannot be “reasoned” into a being; so how can it be taught? **Proverbs 29:15**. How do you drive foolishness from the heart of a child? **Proverbs 22:15**.

As I said, children are just mini-yous. How did YOU learn to obey the law of God? Did God just patiently reason with you? Or did you learn through suffering, privation, and pain? Was it not by being burned that you learned that fire was hot? Was it not by being arrested that you learned that stealing was wrong? Was it not by pain and sickness that you learned that you needed to eat healthy?

Were any of us so humble that we jumped to obey God without any reason other than our own goodness and desire to be kind to others? **Yet that is precisely what every parent I know expects from their children!** Most of us must learn the majority of our lessons the hard way because **we won’t listen when God tries to teach us the easy way.**

So how does God correct us when we won’t listen? **Job 5:17-18**. What is the point of this correction? **Psalms 94:12**. Whom does God correct? **Proverbs 3:11-12**. What does God want from you after the correction? **Revelation 3:19**. How many of God’s sons get this correction? **Hebrews 12:6-7**. Whom *doesn’t* He correct? **Verse 8**. Why does God do this? **Verses 9-11**.

God corrects us the same way He expects us to correct our children. He plainly said so in most of those verses. Because our problem is the same as our children – we do not yet CARE enough about the law. We mostly know what right and wrong is – it simply isn’t *important enough to us!* So God gives us a REASON to care, usually by correcting us with what motivates us most – pain and discomfort.

Sooner or later – depending on just how selfish and stubborn we are and how hard it is to overcome that nature – we will associate this sin with that pain; and next time the impulse to sin comes, we will think twice. We might do it anyway, but then another bout of correction will even more firmly **associate this sin and it’s consequences.**

SIN AND CONSEQUENCES

Fundamentally that’s really all God or parents are trying to do; firmly associate sin with its consequences. Sin carries its own penalties which – eventually – will catch up to us (**Proverbs 5:22, Jeremiah 2:19**). But one of the greatest blessings of God is that we are spared from having to wait!

Rather than take hundreds of lifetimes to see the full harvest of all our sins, God’s corrections can sometimes bring the lessons home to us *the same day as the sin is committed!* A child who starts stealing candy from his parents or toys from his brother, left unchecked, might grow up into a thief and go to jail at 20. Make no mistake, “*the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness*” (**Proverbs 11:3, 5**).

But parents can save him from the wrath of the law and *that same minute* stop him from going down that path! Rather than waiting for the accumulated punishment of 20 years of sins to rain down on his head, a sharp word or even a more severe punishment can seat the association of sin and consequences in his mind the same day!

Children never realize it at the time, just as we seldom realize it when God does it to us, but that is a great blessing – to be spared from the wrath of the law by a relatively small bit of discomfort today (**Proverbs 29:15**). How do you get your children to give you rest? **Proverbs 29:17**.

THE ROLE OF MEN AND WOMEN

I don't want to delve too deeply into discussing the role of women because that is the topic of the next lesson. But you can't discuss child rearing without discussing both of the parents separately – for their jobs are not the same. To understand that, we need to study a great mystery – **Ephesians 5:22-6:4**.

Skimming the details for now, Paul paints a picture of a proper, Godly family structure and concludes that while this is all literally true, there is a deeper meaning, a “mystery” they do not yet understand; that Paul was REALLY talking about the relationship – the *family* relationship – between Christ and the church (**Ephesians 5:32**).

This is a very important fact which we will explore thoroughly at the conclusion of this lesson and in the next as well, but for now let's stick to the point. This tells us that, in effect, Jesus is the man of the house, and the church is the woman of the house. We can easily confirm this from other scriptures.

Now those two – Jesus and the church – have children (**Ephesians 5:1**). And we can learn how we should raise our OWN children based on how that “couple” raises THEIR children. And *vice versa*. So let's ask how they do that; does the church have the authority to severely punish sinners? **1 Corinthians 5:13**. The church had the authority to try to convert the sinner, try to REASON with him according to **Matthew 18**; in other words, to ensure that he KNEW the law. But then the church put the sinner out and then GOD judged – punished – him.

Does the church have the authority to execute sinners? **Acts 5:1-11**. The *church* did not lay a hand on the sinners. GOD killed them. The church just brought it to God's attention. They “told their Father” on them, so to speak. But it was the man of the house who actually enforced the rules and gave them a REASON to care.

There are many such examples in the Bible, so I won't dwell. The OT church, the mother, was guided by the priests. The NT church is also a type of that priesthood (**1 Peter 2:5, 9**). And what is the job of the priest? **Malachi 2:7**. The job of the church, or the mother, is to TEACH knowledge to their children. To fill in the gaps in the law and to reason with them and help them to understand that they ARE sinning.

But if the child doesn't care, if he is determined to be rebellious, the church has no power to “spank” its children. The false church – the wicked stepmother of God's people – spanking the children on its own authority is what led to the Spanish inquisition.

In God's church, we don't torture our members who sin against God. We don't fine them, or beat them, or make them say penances. We try to help them, and explain to them that they have hurt other people; **and if they don't care, we deliver them to “Dad” to hand out their punishment! He will give them a reason to care. He will spank the sinners.**

Likewise in the human family, of which this is a perfect type, it is the woman who was intended to spend the majority of the time raising the child. She has far more influence on the details of a child's development than the father has. But hers is the job of reasoning, patiently teaching, and nurturing. And – not by accident – this is precisely what women instinctively do. God made women that way because that is how God intended women to do their part in raising the children.

HALF THE JOB

But the problem is, that is the ONLY part of discipline modern children get. Today's children are ONLY raised with the mother's style of guidance; today's parents, male or female, universally plead, reason, and explain to their children and *nothing else* – unless they're truly angry, in which case they explode in irrational rage which is just as bad.

But there is another job, the job of the father. As the mother is supposed to *explain* what right and wrong is, the father is supposed to give the children *the reason to care*. The fear of the Father is what leads us all to wisdom, and the fear of our father should also lead us to wisdom as a child (**Psalms 111:10**).

Since the job of the mother, if done properly, is to explain the truth to the children, the father does not need to explain it all over again. Because by the time the children are “delivered unto him”, **they should already KNOW what they did wrong!** His job is to determine the punishment necessary to make them never do this again. What that punishment is depends on the circumstances and the crime.

But – again, not accidentally – this is the way men instinctively try to solve problems. Men are designed to be the heads of the house and perform, on this small scale, the same job God does for the church – that of correction. That of being the person to fear – playing the part of “bad cop”. This is not always a fun job, but it is a *necessary one*.

Without EITHER of these jobs – without both a man and a woman to raise the children – the children grow up warped. Without the love of the mother, they grow up too hard and strict; without the strength of the father, they grow up without boundaries or respect for any law. This is equally true for the human family and the God family.

Imagine a church where God is not involved; where the church nurtures, begs, and pleads with sinners and never expects anything of them. Actually, you don't need to imagine that – go to any church in the world this weekend and you'll see exactly what sort of a “Christian” that creates.

It raises up supposed “children of God”, who never receive actual correction; only “encouragement” and “love” and “patience”. And that creates children of God who are... what? **Hebrews 12:8**. Christians who are exposed only to the “soft side” of the church, without the “hard side” of God's correction are unrighteous, self-satisfied, lazy *false* Christians. They are *not* sons of God – you know what the word of God called them. Illegitimate, to put it gently.

Likewise, that's what usually happens when children are raised with only a woman's guidance, or when both parents follow the feminine philosophy of “all love, no correction”. Because while the woman plays a tremendous part in a child's development, it's ONLY ONE PART. The same goes for the man's part.

Without a proper balanced home life with equal parts love and correction, children grow up hating their parents as so many do today. And in many ways having no more affection for, and just as much resentment towards, their parents as illegitimate children would have had in a normal society.

I should say that in this twisted, sick world there are a ton of single parents. It's going to be hard for them to follow these principles, and I can't help that. Reading a few Bible verses will not undo a lifetime of mistakes and make your situation into the idyllic picture the Bible paints. But you can get close and, with God's help, make it just about perfect if you work at it.

CORRECTION FOR THEIR GOOD

Before you correct a child, ask yourself why you're doing it. For your anger and bruised pride and ego... or for their good? There is no reason to EVER correct a child – or to correct ANYONE – in anger. If you must punish them, whether that's a physical or emotional punishment, it should be when you are calm and collected (**Ecclesiastes 7:9**).

Should you be in control of your anger? **Proverbs 16:32**. Cuffing a child on the head because you were mad at someone else and he was in your way is a *sin*. Unfortunately today's parents veer erratically between irrationally smacking their children for tiny offenses on the one hand, and letting major disobedience and rebellion pass by without a word.

Correcting children is something you do for THEIR good, as God does for us. Not because they irritated or frustrated you, but because what they are doing is hurting THEM, not YOU. We should be delighted if we can avoid punishing them (**Proverbs 19:11**). On the other hand, should you not correct them when they sin? **Proverbs 23:13-14**.

Thanks to evil, selfish, abusive parents and thanks also to Satan's perverted ideas about "love" and his domination of the world's governments, following the Bible's plain commands would get you thrown in jail and your children taken away from you in most nations today. I can't help that either – the Bible's instruction doesn't change because men make it illegal. **What you do is your business; what God said is mine.**

According to God, no child ever died from a spanking from a loving parent (**Proverbs 23:13-14**). The abusive parents who gave such excuse to the system to make spanking illegal would have, in a proper world, never been allowed to become such monsters. Abusive parents are the result of a lifetime of many, many sins; any one of which would have gotten them punished, exiled, or perhaps even executed long before they could vent their frustrations on their helpless families.

That's why the Bible is fairly silent on the subject; if society would follow even a few of the laws in the Bible, the problem could never have even existed in the first place.

THE POINT OF CORRECTION

Every parent – every leader of any kind, for that matter – must firmly understand the POINT of correction. What do you WANT from your child or employee or citizen? Give them SOLUTIONS, not problems. Don't just say, "I hate you!", tell them WHAT they must change in order to be your friend. That is correction. The other is abuse.

The point of all correction is to prevent future sins. It doesn't matter what the subject is; if they haven't broken the law, they haven't sinned, and they don't need correction. If they HAVE sinned, then your ONLY goal is make them never sin again **by using as little correction as is possible (Jude 1:22-23)**.

Read that sentence a few times because everything you'll ever need to know about ruling children, people, cities or kingdoms is contained within it. Follow those words and you'll have a happy domain. Your job is to do whatever you have to do to make sure they have a REASON to stop whatever they're doing. No more, no less. Some can be saved with a kind word; others need the fear of God thrown into them. Your job is to decide what they need and give them that. **The only thing you're trying to accomplish is to get them to STOP doing whatever they're doing.**

My cousins told me a story one time about their childhood; they weren't supposed to go play in the woods behind the house, but they did it anyway; they knew they would only get caught once every three or four times, and **the punishment they got that one time was worth all the fun they had the other times.** They didn't understand the POINT of the punishment at all, did they?

The world tries to set a fixed "price" on each sin. Running a red light costs you \$432. To poor people, this means, "I can't afford to run a red light". To a millionaire, this means "a small price to pay to get there faster". Do you see the problem with that thinking?

"Sin" has become a matter of *price*. Not a matter of absolute, but a matter of relative cost. It means people with money can do whatever they want. They can commit any sin, up to and including murder, as many times as they wish, provided they are willing to pay the "fine". **And that is horribly evil!**

The goal of government is not to put a PRICE on sin, but to make sin STOP. They should only make laws that MATTER and really NEED to be enforced; **and on those laws they must stand firm; if a law is worth making, it must NOT be broken.** If it is, they should throw "the fear of God" into someone enough that there are no repeat offenders!

To return to our red light analogy, the judge's job should be to get people to stop it. So while talking to them, if he thinks they understand their sin and are resolved not to repeat it, a warning should suffice. If they have done this before, and clearly *didn't* understand it last time, then he needs to give them a reason to care; a small fine, relative to their income. If they do it again, then a large fine; or a night in jail, perhaps. If they do it again... you get the point.

The punishment escalates until the thought of the next punishment is so terrifying that they stop for *green* lights! And at the same time, as each punishment escalates, we make more and more certain that they firmly understand the law they broke and WHY it must be kept.

But this should not be a rigid mathematical progression. In other word, first offenders shouldn't automatically get a warning, second offenders get a \$200 fine, third offenders \$1000, fourth offenders a night in jail and so on. It must fit the needs of the situation. I wouldn't trust OUR judges to have such latitude in judgment, but the judges should be righteous, incorruptible men who understand the law and goals of God (and one day, they will be).

So if someone comes in to those judges after their second offense boasting and mocking, saying "give me the fine so I can get on with my life!" **they clearly missed the point!** So rather than giving them an automatic \$200 fine, they might need a night in jail to understand that breaking the law MUST NOT HAPPEN. Then **AFTER THEY HAVE REPENTED you can discuss sentencing.**

Because that's the bottom line – as you learned in Lessons 30-31, you must first judge them guilty of sin and then – AFTER, and only IF, they repent – forgive them. **A judge should never release anyone until he repents.** And then, only if his prior record and attitude give evidence that the repentance is genuine. This is how God raises us; how God's government will raise God's children in the future; and how we should raise our own children.

If a child might not actually understand, give them the benefit of the doubt; tell them not to do that again. But if you've been telling them to "be quiet" for the past 5 minutes while trying to shout a conversation over the din, *the child obviously knew you wanted them to be quiet.* It's time to jump ahead to yelling, punishing, or whatever is necessary to make them learn that **this sin must stop.**

It's really quite simple, and works for children of all ages – up to and including octogenarians. They must know that this is *not* to be done again. Correction isn't a fine that you must pay every so often to keep doing what you want. The punishment must escalate each time to sink in the lesson that this must NOT be done.

CONSISTENCY

But there is a responsibility on you, the leader, to make sure these laws – whatever laws you, as a parent, set – are enforced consistently, fairly, and constantly. This is the single most important thing in training anything, whether it's a child, a parrot, a horse, or a soldier. Consistency!

Psychologists use the word “boundaries” a lot, and that's a good word to use. A child needs to know there are certain things that are NEVER tolerated. They will test you, and push you as far as they can. And they need to find the edge of what is tolerated in the SAME PLACE EVERY TIME. This is the single biggest mistake I see parents make.

One day, talking in your “outside voice” while adults are talking, is tolerated for 30 minutes without a word. Another day, doing the same thing gets them grounded, or spanked, or sent to bed without dinner or some other irrationally chosen correction. Children are not idiots – they know this is unfair, AND IT IS!

You need to be the same person *every day*. God doesn't change His laws to allow stealing one day, then kill you for stealing the next. God, YOUR Father, is “*the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*” (**Hebrews 13:8**). Your children should be able to count on the same from you. You need to sit down with your spouse and decide what rules you want to enforce; bedtime, loud talking, cleanliness, and whatever else needs to be controlled.

Make the rules fair, merciful, and not overly oppressive; make rules that you, as a child, would have wanted done to you because remember – that's the law. Whatsoever you – knowing what you know now – would have wanted your parents to do to you as a child is how you should raise your own kids. Anything else is a sin (**Matthew 7:12**). But whatever rules you make, **enforce them the same every day, every minute.**

Never let an infraction go unacknowledged. Don't let them “get away” with something for weeks then explode in a tower of rage because you can't take it anymore. This confuses them – and rightly so – because you allowed it for weeks, and so they assumed – logically – that it was within their boundaries. Now suddenly you act as if it were miles outside those boundaries, and that makes no sense to them **because it makes no sense to anyone!**

To children that God had given up on correcting – those illegitimate children from **Hebrews 12:8** – what did He say they assumed when He stopped correcting their sins? **Psalms 50:16-21**. Note that God had TRIED – a LOT – to correct them. But they “refused correction”. What is the end of those who refuse correction? **Proverbs 15:10**. So God stopped correcting them after a time and gave up on them (**Jeremiah 15:6**). *And those people assumed that He accepted their sins!*

Your children will assume the same thing if you permit a thing one day, then freak out the next. They will learn to hate your irrational correction (and rightly so), and grow up resentful of authority because the only example of authority they ever had – you – was unreasonable and crazy. Then their sins will be on your head.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

That leads us into a new area – responsibility. When God leaves someone in charge, He will go looking to that person for an explanation if things go wrong. In **Genesis 3**, God went first to Adam in **verses 9-11**. Adam said it wasn't his fault, it was the woman in **verses 12-13**, and she in turn passed the blame on to the serpent in **verse 14**, who had no one else to blame.

The point is, God left Adam in charge, and Adam was the first one God looked to for an explanation; just as it would work in any corporation, government, or office. If you left your oldest child in charge and come home to a house that looked like it had been bombed, from whom would you demand an explanation? God treats His children the same way.

So does God look to parents for an explanation for their child's sins? **1 Samuel 3:13**. Did God feel that Eli, by tolerating his sons' sins, was choosing them over Him? **1 Samuel 2:29**. Had Eli tried talking to them? **Verses 22-25**. Did God think that Eli had done enough to stop his sons from sinning? **Verses 27-35**.

Even though Eli had tried to *reason* with his children, God felt that he hadn't done enough. Eli was otherwise a good priest; but what did Abraham do that Eli didn't? **Genesis 18:19**. Being a righteous man is great; but if you don't **COMMAND** your family after you, to walk in the laws of God, then God will look to YOU for an excuse.

There were many things Eli could have done; at the very least, he should have kicked them out of the priesthood. Considering it was the old covenant under the judges, Eli was at the time the highest authority of God in the land, and vested with the power to execute sinners as Phinehas, his ancestor and high priest before him, had done (**Numbers 25:7-13**). And his sons were probably worthy of death.

Eli failed to live up to the example of his ancestors and said, in effect, "oh, they're good boys; they mean well" instead of exercising the authority of God as he should have. And would have, if they hadn't been his own sons! So Eli got himself cut out of the promises God gave to Phinehas, and given a curse which was fulfilled under Solomon who "fired" Eli's great-grandson in **1 Kings 2:26-27**.

Should parents hide their children's sins from God (and others)? **Deuteronomy 13:6-11**. If a child is rebellious and refuses to listen to his parents after repeated attempts to "persuade" him, what did God command in the OC? **Deuteronomy 21:18-21**. What about striking your parents in anger? **Exodus 21:15, 17**.

Like other OC penalties, we do not have the authority to enforce this today; even then, the parents had to take it before the judges and get them to approve it. But this is what the children who do such things are worthy of. Yet I see children earn this penalty a dozen times each time I visit a supermarket. But they are ignorant of these boundaries; they might as well have been raised by wolves. So while it *is* a sin, the children are ignorant.

The true fault lies with the parents, for not teaching them right and wrong from the cradle. Of course, they can pass the blame to the preachers, who pass it to *their* teachers, who could ultimately pass it to the devil... but remember that is precisely what happened in **Genesis 3**, and even though the blame was passed, *each sinner still received a punishment for his sin!*

So even though the children and the parents are both ignorant, both will receive a punishment for their sins, because sin comes with its own built-in punishment whether God does anything or not. Watch any modern family for a few minutes and you will see them receiving just a few of these punishments.

THE BURDEN OF BLAME

I said at the beginning that parents are not always right. This is true; but it often doesn't matter whether they are right or wrong if **it's their decision to make. So they are always "right" in that sense.** Up to a certain age, at least.

Most everyone knows that all the adults who left Egypt died in the wilderness except two. Understanding why will help make sense of this question. The summary of the story is in **Deuteronomy 1:19-40**. More details are added in **Numbers 14:22-35**. The bottom line is, except Joshua and Caleb, everyone over 20 died on the other side of the Jordan River from the Promised Land because of their lack of faith, stubbornness, and just plain evilness.

But those under 20 were spared. Why? **Deuteronomy 1:39**. God did not hold them responsible because they had "*no knowledge between good and evil*". A lot of fascinating information comes from that phrase. First, here's an obvious question; which tree was Eve not supposed to eat? **Genesis 2:17**. What did Satan say the tree would do? **Genesis 3:5**. What did she do? **Verse 6**. What did God say had happened as a result of their sin? **Verse 22**.

So Eve ate the fruit, as did Adam, and they both "knew good and evil". **So how is it possible that those children under 20 in Egypt DIDN'T know good and evil??** Simply because it doesn't mean what everyone thinks it means! The children in Egypt KNEW good and evil, in the sense we understand the term. But they *did not have the right to choose good from evil!*

It was their parent's job to make rules for them; to set bedtimes, to decide that they had to eat liver for dinner, to decide to move to a different town or find a new church. These were rules that their parents made FOR them, and the children were bound to obey or, if they were rebellious, to suffer the death penalty.

Does God blame you for someone *else's* choice? **Deuteronomy 24:16, Ezekiel 18:20**. Since children are bound to obey their parents, they are not to blame for their parents' choices. Thus, they did not "know good from evil" – *that is, they were not permitted to CHOOSE good from evil!*

Meanwhile, back in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were told NOT to eat from that fruit, and to obey the commands of God. They, as children of God, were supposed to **let God decide for them what good and evil were!**

But when they listened to Satan instead, they REJECTED God's rule over them, and stole that authority to themselves; they rejected God's right to tell them good and evil and decided to figure it out on their own. In a sense, they "ran away from home". So God kicked them out of the garden and let them. Like every parent tells their teen at some point, "as long as you live in MY house, you'll follow MY rules".

Yet when children turned twenty this "knowledge of good and evil" automatically becomes theirs, for it then becomes their *choice* to live by their parents' rules or to strike out on their own in the world. If they follow their parents into sin at that point, it becomes THEIR choice; thus they share in the blame.

It naturally follows that after Adam and Eve had been properly trained in the law of God they would have been qualified one day to chart their own course and make their own destiny *righteously*. When they were ready, when God could trust them with the authority, **they would have eaten of that fruit eventually! That was always part of the plan!** But they ran away from home and ate it before it was “ripe”, and suffered incredibly for it.

GRACE AND CHILDREN

Back to the point, what this means is that children under 20 cannot be held responsible for *any sin* by the state except rebellion against their parents. Otherwise, **their parents carry full blame for every sin they commit.**

Of course, for that to work the state must give the parents full reign to raise the children as they see fit; which no modern state does – and given the evil state of the world today, it’s probably just as well. But we’re speaking, as always, in the ideal, and this is how the Kingdom of God will be run.

If a child steals or breaks something, his parents will be held responsible to make it good and punish the child. The child is not held responsible by God or man. **All his sins fall on his parents, and they in turn are responsible to punish him as necessary to prevent future sins.**

This INSPIRES parents to be good parents! Because THEY will be punished for his sins! Both his physical sins, AND his spiritual sins – for parents are responsible for both aspects of his development. Children are in a cocoon of grace, because in God’s eyes until they are 20 years old, “they know not what they do”.

This is an awesome responsibility for a parent to face. But this is the job of a parent. God will blame you for your children’s sins, no matter what they are, or whether you knew them or not, until they have rebelled against you or turned 20. Because if it isn’t your responsibility, whose is it?

It must be *someone’s responsibility*, and they don’t know good from evil. You are in charge of all aspects of their life, at your discretion, therefore it is YOU who must be responsible. This helps to explain **Job 1:5**. In God’s system, SOMEONE is always responsible for everything; that’s the beauty of the system, and the great evil of bureaucracy. As long as children sincerely acknowledge the authority of the patriarch, he is responsible for their well-being.

But you are even MORE responsible for your children’s sins if you don’t correct them the instant you hear of it (**Numbers 30:3-5** is a similar principle). God asks no more of you than He expects from Himself, for He died to carry the blame for His children’s sins (**Ephesians 5:25, 1 Timothy 2:6**). He expects us to be willing to do the same.

Many of today’s parents would give anything – even die – to COVER or HIDE the sins of their children, to shield them from embarrassment or the punishment they deserve for their sins. But that is an even greater sin than tolerating them; that actively encourages their evil and helps them to disobey God – much like the sin of Eli.

Jesus died to allow us to live *until* we understood our sins, and then – only AFTER we repent – He pays for our sins. Jesus’ goal is to CORRECT our sins, not to hide them; not to pretend they never happened, **but to ensure that they never happen again!** Our goal for our children should be the same.

HOW TO TEACH YOUR CHILDREN

If elders are not always wise, children are almost always foolish. And age alone does not always cure it. Solomon lamented that he was going to leave all his hard-earned wealth to his son in **Ecclesiastes 2:18-21**, because “*who knows whether he shall be a wise man or a fool*”? And as it happened, Solomon had good reason to be concerned – his son *was* a fool (**1 Kings 12:1-17**). He *did* squander the kingdom his father and grandfather spent eighty years building, in a matter of weeks.

Whom did God intend should teach your children? **Deuteronomy 4:9-10**. How did God intend for children to learn the truth? **Deuteronomy 6:7**. How did Abraham’s children learn the truth? **Genesis 18:19**. Who was going to teach children about the Passover? **Exodus 12:26-27, Exodus 13:14-15**. Was this model intended to continue for all generations? **Psalms 78:4-6**. How were NC parents supposed to teach their children? **Ephesians 6:4**.

People learn by doing. They don’t learn by reading, or hearing sermons; they learn by doing. They learn how to do by watching others do – not by hearing or reading how others do. Sure, they pick up facts here and there by reading or hearing; but if a picture is worth a thousand words, watching someone do it right is worth a hundred thousand.

You can tell your children right and wrong a thousand times, and destroy it all by setting a bad example one time. On the other hand, you could not talk to them about right and wrong at all and, by setting a perfect example, show them exactly what they need to be. Children can smell hypocrisy a mile away, far better than adults as a rule. They smell it, and they instinctively hate it.

Ideally, we’d have it all figured out by the time we have children; realistically, we’re human and that doesn’t happen. Most of us are lucky if we have a stable income by the time we have kids, much less have the answers to the universe’s hardest questions.

So your children are going to see mistakes in you; and you need to be honest about them and tell them why you did it and that you’ll do better next time. This doesn’t weaken you in their eyes; it strengthens you. Adults make mistakes too, and if you pretend otherwise children will see right through it.

But the key is, you need to TALK to them about it. About everything; YOU, not a “Sunday school” teacher needs to be the one to tell them about God. Not even if the teacher were a true Christian sainted by God Himself; *you* are responsible for your child’s spiritual upbringing, and YOU need to be the one to ingrain the true values of God into them from an early age.

Talk to them about the law of God; explain that everything understands the law of God, as you read above; tell them the story of the Bible in simple terms. It’s fun, and they’ll usually enjoy it if you love it, too. Do these things when you rise up and when you sit down, and you will be raising a child up in the way that he should go.

They will ask questions you’ve never thought of, questions you won’t know the answer for; so go look for the answer. You might both learn something. This is how God intended for children to be raised; and that leads us to the culmination of this lesson, and a completely new look at Christianity’s most sacred institution; the church.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

I didn't talk much about the details of how to punish children in this lesson because that really isn't the point of the lesson. Besides, it's pretty much a no-brainer in the Bible. You read most of the scriptures on the subject, they're clear, so we moved on.

But if properly guided when young, children seldom really need punishment. Most of the time the fear of punishment is enough to keep them within the boundaries. And that opens up vast amounts of time for the REAL purpose of child rearing!

As a parent, you have been entrusted with a new life. A new life that never existed before in the history of the universe, and for which you are jointly responsible (with your spouse). And it is YOUR job to take this new life and mold it into a creature which is fit to be turned into a literal child of God; a glowing, immortal being who will rule at God's side for eternity. Think about that. Sobering, isn't it?

This has a lot less to do with spankings and time-outs and groundings than it has to do with education; with imparting to them what you know of the nature of God. With the glories of the universe God has planned, and their potential part in it. That is the important part, and much more time has been devoted to that process than the boring details of punishment.

But even that is not truly the point of this lesson. For all of this is only a metaphor, a small shadow of the true purpose of this understanding. As you read in **Ephesians 5:32**, in telling us how to raise children Paul was – in his cryptic way – revealing to us a great mystery about Christ and the church.

The instructions Paul gave us for managing our families are all based on the way that God manages HIS family. In Hebrews, he compares the correction God gives us with the correction a parent gives his children. Throughout the Bible we are called the children of God, and He is called our Father. This gives us an ironclad principle of duality that **anything said about raising literal children applies equally to raising spiritual children!**

This means that all the scriptures that tell us how to raise OUR children can be used for a much deeper purpose! Because now we know those SAME scriptures are also instructions on how to raise and train SPIRITUAL children.

In the past two lessons you've learned that God's family on Earth is a patriarchy; and that the apostle whom God sends brings the truth to people, who then become his spiritual children as Timothy did; and Paul instructed Timothy in turn to go out and commit this truth to others. Those others would become *his* spiritual children, who would then pass it on to others, and so on (**2 Timothy 2:2**). Thus an unending chain of descendants, spreading out to fill the whole earth.

And now we can apply the scriptures above (such as **Deuteronomy 11:19**) to learn how a church *should* be guided by its patriarch or elder; but wait – that doesn't fit with the modern idea of church service at all, does it? How could Paul talk about God to his "son" Timothy "*when he sat in his house, and when he walked by the way, when he lay down, and when he rose up*"?

He couldn't.... if Timothy only visited church once a week like everyone does today! We find very few examples of church services in the Bible, because what we think of as church seldom worked well. In the OC, there were hereditary priests who managed the mundane jobs of sacrificing and teaching; but those who understood the NC in those days were usually classified as prophets, not priests.

Prophets, almost by definition, tended to be isolationists (**Hebrews 11:35-38**). When a new prophet was to be trained by an old one, they always worked as an apprentice; Elijah and Elisha for example; Moses and Joshua; Eli and Samuel; Saul and David. The last is not a perfect example, but it does show that David apprenticed under a king for a while before becoming king himself.

The NC carried the trend further, with John and his disciples, Jesus and the twelve, Paul and his company (**Acts 13:13, 21:8**) – it seems that all the apostles did something similar from **1 Corinthians 9:5**. You get the idea. What the world sees as a democracy, now that you understand government, is obviously a simple master-and-apprentice relationship.

Paul told Timothy “*thou hast FULLY KNOWN my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith... [etc]*”, (**2 Timothy 3:10**). Timothy could not ever have “fully known” Paul’s manner of life if Paul were like a modern minister in any modern church. There simply is no way for it to happen when the minister shows up at church, shakes hands, pontificates for a few minutes, shakes hands again and then goes home. Only the apprentice model would make this possible.

What would you do for a very valuable pearl or a gold mine? **Matthew 13:44-46**. According to that parable, the kingdom of God – the truth – is like that. If you love the truth, and you learn that the truth is in a certain place, or with a certain person, you should be willing to sell all that you have to get it; to move somewhere, live under a bridge in a shopping cart if necessary; because if you truly love the truth as you ought, nothing on Earth should matter to you like that matters.

For a few examples of that kind of attitude, how badly did Abigail wish to marry David? **1 Samuel 25:40-41**. What was the prodigal son willing to do in order to be back in his father’s house? **Luke 15:17-21**. After Jesus returns, when the true Christian is finally valued by the world, how will the world treat those who have the truth? **Isaiah 4:1-3**. Did Elijah encourage Elisha to follow him? **1 Kings 19:20-21**. How did the disciples act when they heard that Jesus had come? **Matthew 4:18-22**.

Our society is a little different today, but these principles apply now as well as then. The farther the church drifts from personalized instruction and “speaking of these things when you sit down, and when you rise up”, the weaker it gets. The more it becomes a corporate once-a-week duty, the weaker the children of God become – spiritually.

You never fully know a man’s doctrine and manner of life until you are his apprentice. Until you say to him “just let me wash your clothes and serve you tea, only let me learn the truth from you”. This is not the *only* way to learn the truth, but it is the fastest and gives the best results. If you really mean it.

Because really, that’s what we’re all doing; telling God that we realize that He is the only One who has the words of life; and that we would rather wash His feet than live as a king without His laws (**Psalms 84:10**). Just so long as we can live in His house and become like Him. It is no surprise that David summed it up best when he said...

Psalms 27:4 *One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.*

This work is completely non-denominational and is meant to fulfill Christ's great commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (**Mark 16:15**). **This publication is not to be sold**; "*freely ye have received, freely give*" (**Matthew 10:8**).

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