

God's Truth: Authority and Discipline

by Russell Kelfer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of parental authority and discipline in reflecting God's authority and providing a framework for children to learn and grow.

Duration: 34:01

Scripture: Proverbs 6:20-23, Proverbs 13:24, Proverbs 15:5, Proverbs 17:25, Proverbs 19:18

Topics: "Discipline"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of God's word and the need for consistency in following through with what is said. He shares a personal anecdote about his son expressing the desire for his father to do what he says. The preacher also discusses the different ways in which God disciplines His people, sometimes withholding blessings or rewards. He highlights the influence of various societal institutions, such as the media, education, counseling, and entertainment, in promoting worldly standards. The sermon concludes with a reminder that God has a purpose for every individual and that discipline is a crucial aspect of spiritual growth.

Transcript

The lesson you're about to hear is designed to help you in your spiritual pilgrimage. We pray that this will be a blessing in your life. Our teacher is Russell Kelfer of the Into His Likeness radio broadcast.

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We also invite you to visit us anytime on the World Wide Web. Our Internet address is simply www.dtm.org. We pray God's richest blessing may be yours as He continues to live His life in you. We turn this morning to our little side trip into a study of double-mindedness, a study that James calls spiritual adultery.

We continue our study of the lies that Satan tells and the contrasting truth in the word of God. This double-mindedness comes from man's confused computer, the mind into which is fed some 90 to 98 percent of the time by the world's philosophy, a standard of impurity, that there Some 2 to 10 percent of the time, depending on how much we spend in the word, that computer is programmed for moral purity,

absolutes, convictions, selflessness, and a yielded will. You'll remember that the enemy's attack is centered basically in five areas of society.

The media, which reports as natural, the standards of the world. Secular education, which teaches as reality, the standards of the world. Secular counseling, which reinforces as redeeming, the standards of the world.

Entertainment, which demonstrates as fulfilling, the standards of the world. And progressive religion, which accepts as progressive, the standards of the world. All the while, the word of God denying as false, the standards of the world.

Satan's goal, you recall, is fourfold. He wants to discredit God, his worth, his word, his works, and his ways. And he has, for generations, challenged God subtly, deceptively.

But as history races seemingly to a head-on collision with the judgment of God, and the church rushes quickly into the arms of its master, Satan has become more brash, more overt. Daring to the point of lunacy. Guilty of overkill.

And the church of Jesus Christ all across the world is being jolted into the reality of the spiritual conflict. And the end result could well be the most amazing revival the world has ever known. One thing the church must do, and by the church I mean us, is to shake off that double-minded mentality.

Take some new stands on some old issues. Issues that separate the king's men from the king's enemies. The issues thus far have been these, that Satan has lied about the character of man.

He has lied about man's relationship to God. He has lied about what constitutes success. He has lied about morality.

He has told us that morality is relative, that marriage is not necessary for a physical relationship, that divorce is an acceptable alternative. He has lied to us about the home. He said the home is no longer relevant as the center of society, while God says it is a training ground for discipleship, and it is God's picture book of God as Father.

And last week we learned that Satan has lied about the roles of man and woman. He says they are not clearly defined. His answer is E-R-A, equality by rebellion to authority.

God's answer is E-D-A, equality, diversity, authority. This morning we come to the sixth area of conflict between the lies of Satan and the truth of God. Satan's lies about parents, authority, and discipline.

There are at least six lies that the world has bought in this regard. The first one is that parental authority is a threat to a child's emotional well-being and a violation of his personal rights. The second is that discipline, physical or otherwise, is outdated and unhealthy.

The third is that basic concepts of authority must give way to, quote, mutual expression. The fourth is that loyalty under authority to a nation is no longer a virtue. The fifth is that rebellion is an acceptable means to accomplish a reasonable purpose.

And the last is that the Bible is not man's infallible authority. Lies and the spiritual truth these lies adulterate are even more important. Let's begin with the first.

Satan has convinced much of the world, has affected most of its psychology, permeated its counseling, permeated its educational system, and permeated the entertainment industry with this lie, that adult authority, parents, teachers, church leaders, but in particular parents, are violating children's rights by imposing standards, rules, and ethics. By making decisions the children are not equipped to make themselves. There was an article in the paper that in Sweden there was their first divorce.

Now you know better than that if you've read much about Sweden, but this was a different kind of divorce. This was the first divorce in Sweden where a child sued his parents for divorce. A 15-year-old girl sued her parents for divorce and won.

She was taken out of the home by the courts as she won the case where she was no longer required to do what her parents wanted her to do because it was displeasing to her. You see the lie? If children of men are not under the authority of earthly parents, then what does that say? What right then does a heavenly father have to impose his will on his children? That's the principle. It brings up the whole question of who's in charge and who decides what's best, parents or children.

Who decides what movies they see? Who decides what schools they attend? Who decides what friendships they have? Who decides what music they listen to? Who knows what's best? That's the issue. I was asked by one of you one day this week if I would stop this morning long enough to discuss the subject of Halloween and who decides. What about trick-or-treating? Well, I thought I would stop just long enough to address the issue.

Some parents find no problem with it. Many don't. Others are devastated at the thought of their children participating in something so pagan.

What's a good stance for Christians to take? Lock them in the house and tell them it's evil? Send them out with the others and say nothing? Or is there some creative alternative between the two? First the principles and then the alternatives. First, Halloween, All Saints' Day, is as pagan as any celebration we have. It began in Britain with the belief that on one year, on October the 31st, Simon, the Lord of the Dead, called forth many evil spirits.

To ward off these creatures, they built big bonfires to scare them away. And all of the customs that have derived from Halloween began with that origin. Number two, as Paul wrote concerning meat offered to idols, nothing is evil in and of itself.

It's evil in the mind of the one who participates. Thirdly, Paul added, however, there are actual demons that the pagans were worshiping and we should be careful not to participate in their ceremonies. The meat wasn't bad, the practice was.

That's the principle. So, four, to dress up your children as witches and goblins or evil spirits is definitely a no-no. Fifthly, nothing is neutral character-wise, so we always ask our question, what principle am I teaching? And the principle of trick-or-treating is basically this.

It has its roots in, you give me something or I'll get you. So the character quality it elevates probably is not really one of the best. But do you want to take these little ones, so impressionable, and tell them that God hates Halloween? Thus implying God is angry with all their friends because all their friends are doing it.

And further implying that God's children just don't have any fun like everybody else. Here's where I believe Christians whose consciences are wounded over their children's participation could be creative but

scriptural. Have fun and yet take something pagan and turn it to something godly.

So I want to give you three possibilities very quickly, if you have little children, that you might want to think about. Prearrange with other Christian families to meet at two or three houses during the evening, instead of just turning loose in the neighborhood. And do one of these three things.

Number one, let your children dress up in costumes of different Bible characters. Go to the other homes and act out a Bible story that they have prepared and see if the others can guess what story it is. Then have one of the parents fill in the story and tell the character qualities that can be learned from the story.

Or secondly, if you leave your children at home, perhaps a second possibility, have them act out a story that expresses a quality corresponding with the meaning of their own name. So that through this experience they will begin to understand what God has in store for them as a result of the name that He, through you, has given them. Or a third alternative, again with the use of friends, would be to have the children dress like animals.

They do that a lot of times anyhow. Sometimes they act like it, but at least dress like it. And then have someone read Bill Gothard's character sketches that correspond with that animal story.

Incidentally, this is something that even school teachers can do in public schools. For you can teach character without violating what amounts to their freedom from religion. And then afterwards, you can reward them with treats because God teaches rewards and delights to give good things to His children.

It's all a matter of personal conscience, but these are some possibilities. Remember though, you're in charge, not the kids. Satan has distorted that.

His goal is to discredit the authority of God. But the Scripture is clear, and the verses we're sharing this morning ought to be memorized by your children from the time they are early enough to speak. It ought to be like frontlets between their eyes.

Maybe what we need, incidentally, is a year of the parent. Here are some verses, Proverbs 6, 20 through 23. Most of these are in the Living Bible.

Young man, obey your father and your mother. They ought to memorize that. Tie their instructions around your finger so you won't forget.

Every day and all night long, their counsel will save you from harm. When you wake up in the morning, let their instructions guide you into a new day. For their advice is a beam of light directed into the dark corners of your mind to warn you of danger and to give you a good life.

Your children memorize that yet? They ought to. Proverbs 15, 5. Only a fool despises his father's advice. Proverbs 17, 25.

A rebellious son is a grief to his father and a blow to his mother. Proverbs 30, 17. A man who mocks his father and despises his mother shall have his eye plucked out by the ravens and be eaten by vultures.

You get the message, though. Exodus 21, 15. Anyone who strikes his father or mother shall surely be put to death.

Ephesians 6, 1 in the Amplified. Children, obey your parents in the Lord as His representative, for this is just and right. Honor, esteem, and value is precious, your father and your mother.

This is the first commandment with a promise that all may be well with you and you may live long on the earth. Colossians 3, 20. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is well-pleasing to the Lord.

Do your children know those verses? Are they just obeying you because you say to obey you? Do they grasp they're supposed to obey you because God gave them special commandments and special blessings for doing it? We mentioned last Sunday the pendulum of satanic extremes concerning women's rights and the concept of children's rights is the same but more so. Barclay says that in pre-Christian civilizations and in Paul's day, life was at best perilous for the child. There was in Rome what was known as the father's power.

A Roman father had absolute power over his children. He could sell them as slaves, he could make them work in the field in chains. If he chose, even inflict the death penalty on his own children.

A Roman son never came of age. Even as a grown man, he might be the chief magistrate of the city, yet he was under his father's power. There was also the custom of child exposure.

When a child was born, it was placed before its father's feet and if the father stooped and lifted the child, it meant he acknowledged it and wanted to keep it. But if he turned and walked away, it meant he refused to acknowledge it and either the child would be given away or thrown in the garbage. One illustration of this is a letter dated 1 B.C. from a man named Hilarion to his wife Alice.

It's a letter that reflects affection on the one hand, but is so callous to life where children are concerned. Here's the letter, Hilarion to Alice, his wife, heartiest greetings. Know that we are still even now in Alexandria.

Do not worry if I must remain in Alexandria when the others return. I beg and beseech you to take care of a little child. As soon as we receive wages, I will send them to you.

If, good luck to you, you have a child and it is a boy, let it live. If it is a girl, throw it out. He goes on to say, you told Aphrodisias to tell me to not forget me.

How could I forget you? I beg you not to worry. Isn't that tender? If it's a boy, keep it. If it's a girl, throw it in the garbage.

The marriage bond had collapsed and it was in a world like that children were viewed as a misfortune. Unwanted children were left to be discarded, picked up by anybody who desired, taken as slaves or raised as prostitutes. Children were things, not people.

The sickly or deformed child had a fate that was even worse. Seneca writes, we slaughter a fierce ox, we strangle a man-dog, we plunge the knife into sickly cattle lest they taint the herd. Children who are born weakly or deformed, we drown.

It was against this kind of backdrop that Jesus came, healed those that were blind from birth, cleansed the lepers, drew the little children into his arms and said, Suffer the little children and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of heaven. And it was Jesus who penetrated man's callous and indifferent attitude towards children when he said, It would be better for you to have a millstone hanged around your neck, and that

you be drowned in the depths of the sea, than that you cause just one of these little ones to stumble. It was because of Jesus that Paul wrote, Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord.

Jesus liberated children too, free but under authority. This is the subject we've covered in two of our last three lessons, the spiritual significance of the family. The father's role is to portray physically the role of God, the spiritual father.

The child's role is to portray the role of the child of God, the church. Two weeks ago we listed 22 things a good father communicates about the character of God. Now, we must return to communicating the basic principles of parental authority.

So I'm going to encourage you that your children understand at least four principles. Principle number one, when they respond to their parents, they in essence are responding to God through His chosen representative. Two, their response to earthly parents tells their unsaved friends a story about man's relationship to God.

Three, they are responding to the office, not the character or consistency of the one holding that office. Daddy may lose his temper. He may be rude, uncouth.

He may be hauled off to jail by the game warden. But you still obey him because of the office he holds, the position he holds. Fourthly, God did not make a mistake.

These parents were ordained of God for their life message to be developed. Therefore, it will work together for good. And school teachers, you have a real responsibility.

So many children you teach from broken homes, from bad situations, to be able to communicate to them that God is entrusting them to learn deep truths early, to depend on Him totally. He has a message for them, and He makes no mistakes. The second aspect of this lesson, which of course builds on the first, is a principle which is an even greater danger in our society.

It is the concept of discipline. We heard a few weeks ago about a child that was even taken from his family here in the United States because he was disciplined. We know that in the school systems today it is increasingly difficult to discipline children.

If it is wrong for parents, for schools, for churches to tell their children what to do, then surely Satan says it is wrong to punish them for not doing it. But the lie goes deeper than that. And this is the principle.

It says if discipline is unfair in the home, then discipline is unfair in the courts. If discipline is unfair in the courts, discipline is unfair in the church. And if all this is true, then maybe God does not have the right to punish His children.

Maybe there is no judgment. Maybe there is no hell. Maybe there is no chastisement of the saints.

The lie is if love means no discipline and God is love, you see the picture? That is the problem. Now, there is no place where the Scripture speaks more clearly. What is discipline? Discipline, the dynamic that produces disciples.

I simply want to list for you from the Scriptures why we must discipline our children and how we must discipline our children. Discipline can be self-imposed or God-imposed. God imposes discipline three

ways, through circumstances, through conviction, and through authority.

There is positive and negative discipline. Positive discipline is training to direct. Negative discipline is chastisement to correct.

If we look at God's principles of disciplining His children and His commandments to us to discipline ours, together I think they merge into a bunch of crystal clear principles. So let's begin. Why must we discipline our children? Number one, to demonstrate love.

I wish I had memorized this passage 20 years ago. You see, you say psychologists do not all agree on discipline. That is true.

Who do you listen to? Spock, Brothers, or Landers? Well, why not listen to God? He is the one authority that has never changed His mind. The first reason is to demonstrate love. Proverbs 13, 24, Living Bible, says this, If you refuse to discipline your son, it proves you don't love him.

For if you love him, you will be prompt to punish him. Principle number two, discipline early to save him from grief. Proverbs 19, 18, Discipline your son in his early years while there is hope.

If you don't, you will ruin his life. There's a lot of us that would like to have memorized a lot of these verses earlier in our lives. But some of you here are just beginning with families.

And you can begin today to recognize the principle. God speaks very clearly early, very early when they begin to run the household. They can run it with tears, tantrums, whatever.

If they can control you, that's the time discipline must begin. Discipline your son in his early years while there's hope. If you don't, you're ruining his life.

Psalms 119, 67, I used to wander off until you punished me. Now I closely follow all you have to say. Third reason for punishing, God says, is to chase evil from the heart.

Proverbs 20, 30, Punishment that hurts chases evil from the heart. Punishment that hurts chases evil from the heart. Proverbs 22, 15, A youngster's heart is filled with rebellion, but punishment will drive it out of him.

What if you have a child that just dares you to punish him? The Scripture has something to say about that in Isaiah 5, 19. It says they dare the Lord to punish them. Hurry and punish us, Lord.

We want to see what you can do. Therefore, God will deal with them. The fourth reason is to direct them to God.

Proverbs 23, 13, and 14. You tell them about a God of discipline, a God of love, a God of order, a God of justice. They must understand the principle of discipline.

Proverbs 23, don't fail to correct your children. Discipline won't hurt them. They won't die if you use a stick on them.

Punishment will keep them out of hell. Proverbs 23, 13, and 14. Number five, we punish to save ourselves from grief.

Proverbs 29, 15, Scolding and spanking a child helps him to learn. Left to himself, he brings shame to his mother. Proverbs 29, 17, Discipline your son, and he will give you happiness and peace of mind.

Proverbs 15, 20, A sensible son gladdens his father, but a rebellious son saddens his mother. Sixthly, discipline to set an example for others. Proverbs 21, 11, The wise man learns by listening.

The simpleton only by seeing scorners punished. Ezekiel 5, 8, and 9, God said to Israel, I will punish you publicly so all the nations can watch. Proverbs 19, 25, Punish a mocker, and others will learn from his example.

Your young ones learn by seeing the older ones punished. We don't need to hide that from them. Well, if these are the reasons God punishes, how does He do it? These are the principles we find in Scripture.

Number one, He punishes after first warning. 2 Corinthians 13, 1 and 2, This is my third warning, Paul said. I have already warned you, warned those who have been sinning.

Now I warn you again. This time I come ready to punish you. Why did God send the prophets? To warn of impending punishment.

So that when the punishment came, they would understand why it was coming. Secondly, always in love. Jeremiah 31, 20, The Lord replies, Ephraim is still my son, my darling child.

I had to punish him, but I still love him. Thirdly, always in keeping with His word. The best illustration that keeps coming to my mind is the story of Moses.

What a beautiful, obedient servant. But on one occasion, he violently disobeyed the will of God. When he was to speak to the rock, and he struck it.

And afterwards, God said to Moses, Because of that incident, you cannot go into the land. God continued to use Moses, and he was probably the most beautifully used man in the history of the Word. And when the time came to go into the land, Moses, as an old man with all kind of stars in his crown, eased up to God and said, You remember on the top of that mountain, he said, Lord, I've been a good boy.

I'm almost 90 or so, but I've been a good boy all this time, except for that one incident. How about changing your mind? God said, You have been a good boy, Moses. But my word is my word.

And I believe it's at this point, as a parent, that I have failed more than any other single thing. And some of you ought to shake your heads and agree. The key is, don't threaten what you cannot do.

But once you threaten, do it. My son said to me one time, a number of years ago, I can never forget it. He said, Dad, I just wish whatever you say you're going to do, you'd do it.

Then I'd know where I stand. How does that make you feel? But that's the truth. Fourthly, varying the method to meet the need.

God doesn't punish always the same. Sometimes He withholds blessings or rewards. He told the children of Israel, You're not going to get to go into the land because of your rebellion.

You just wander around in the wilderness and suffer. That's your punishment. Sometimes by rewarding the good in others, He punishes those who don't get in on it.

Sometimes just the sound of His voice is punishment enough. And sometimes a parent who speaks always in love, speaks with great authority. Isaiah 30, verse 31, The voice of the Lord shall punish the Assyrians.

The psalmist said, The Lord speaks and the mountains quake. And if you're not always screaming at your children in anger, when you do speak with authority, they listen. And sometimes the sound of your voice is enough.

Fourthly, oftentimes God punishes through chastisement or physical discipline. Proverbs 29, verse 19, Sometimes mere words aren't enough. Discipline is needed.

For the words may not be heeded. And then fourthly, One method is letting them reap what they've sown. Jeremiah 2, verse 19, Your own wickedness will punish you.

That's hard to do as a parent. But you know sometimes if we can just step back and let them bear the fruit of what they're doing, if we know it's something they can live through without serious scars, that's the deepest kind of punishment you can give them. Fifthly, God never punishes in anger.

Psalms 6, verse 1, No, Lord, don't punish me in the heat of your anger. Psalm 38, verse 1, Oh, Lord, don't punish me while you're angry. He answers in Hosea 11, verse 9, No, I will not punish you as much as my fierce anger tells me to.

And how often we as parents will not simply wait until the heat cools down and we can look with love in their eyes and honestly discipline the children. But we discipline in anger and hostility. And what we get back is anger and hostility.

Sixthly, God disciplines proportionate to the sin. Jeremiah 25, verse 14, I will punish them in proportion to their treatment of my people. In other words, don't empty the whole bag of discipline over the first offense.

They must see the gravity of greater disobedience. Seventh, proportionate to their understanding. Luke 12, 42 to 49, Anyone not aware he is doing wrong will be punished lightly.

Much is required to whom much is given. Their responsibility is greater. You've told the child a second time, or they're older, or they have deeper understanding, the punishment ought to be progressively greater.

That's God's principle. Number eight, punish to correct, not to destroy. To break their will, but not their spirit.

Jeremiah 46, 28, I will destroy the nations, but I will not destroy you. I will punish you, but only enough to correct you. Be sensitive to what it takes to correct the spirit without breaking it.

Number nine, with forgiveness upon repentance. How many times does our anger and our hostility not allow us to forgive our children when they really repent? Psalm 86, 5, But thou, Lord, art good, ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon you. They must learn the difference between forgiveness and reaping.

God forgave Moses, but he still didn't get to go into the land. And then, tenthly, with encouragement afterwards. After the punishment, Psalm 51, 8, After you punished me, give me back my joy again.

1 Peter 5, 10, After you suffered a little while, our God, who is full of kindness through Christ, will give you His eternal glory. He personally will come, pick you up, set you firmly in place, and make you stronger than ever. And lastly, sometimes allow your children to go through undeserved punishment to test their spirit.

1 Peter 2, 19, Praise the Lord if you are punished for doing right. We make mistakes as parents, and God uses those mistakes to teach our children deeper truths than they learn even when they're corrected rightly. So, as always, God's truth is clear, and it is in direct opposition to the lies of Satan.

God gave children parents to direct them, to protect them, but also to correct them. And He gave children two direct commandments. Children, honor your parents.

That is, respect them. Set them up on high in your heart. And then secondly, obey your parents.

Do what they say as though God were speaking through them to you, because He is. He gave parents direct instructions. He said, discipline your children.

While there is time, if you don't, you will ruin their lives. It's a big part of our responsibility. And those of you with young children must start now if you have not already started.

It must be consistent, and it must be bathed in love. Because unless Christian parents and Christian teachers begin anew to faithfully instill in our children the beauty of authority, the necessity of obedience, and the blessing that comes with punishment, another generation will grow up with no respect for the authority of God and no concept of the discipline of God, and therefore never fully grasping the love of God. Some of you are just embarking on the seas of training up a child in the way he should go.

Contrary to the lies of the enemy, I just want to remind you to have love in your heart and a switch in your hand is not incompatible. It is rather the will of God. Let's pray.

Father, thank You that You punish us. Thank You, Father, that You don't just leave us to ourselves. Thank You that Your punishment is just and good and that it causes us to turn around and head in the right direction.

It brings us joy. Thank You, Father, that You're always there to love us, welcome us back into Your arms, draw us to Yourself, and encourage us when the punishment is over. Thank You that You never punish in anger, but that You always punish fairly and in love.

Thank You that You always keep Your Word, that You never say one thing and do another. God, implant these principles in our hearts and teach us while there is yet time to discipline our children, to teach them the concepts from the time they are able to see and hear and talk and think, to honor their parents, to obey their parents, no matter what the world system has to say. Because You have told us this is just and this is right.

And this brings glory to You. For it's in the name of Jesus we ask it. Amen.

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