

PROVERBS

SKILL IN THE ART OF LIVING

PART SEVEN – “DISCIPLINE AS DISCIPLESHIP”

By Pastor David Fields

Proverbs 3:11-12

I. God's Discipline

“My son, do not despise the Lord’s discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.”

Proverbs 3:11-12

Why not 'despise' or 'resent' God's rebuke? Because as a father delights in his son and wants the best for him.

God's discipline **is an act of love** says this proverb. Correction is so that we can live most fully alive.

The writer of Hebrews picks up and cites this proverb directly in his sermon in the New Testament and then comments the following on it:

“Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline is pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” – Hebrews 12:9-11

Discipline is equated with *training*. Discipline is about becoming something.

Maybe there is a sense that you need to respond to his discipline – to say, “Lord, please do the work in me; change me. Do what you need to”? The reason we can be open to this is, well, that love.

II. Character, Example, and Self-Discipline

“Example is not the best form or leadership. It’s the only form.” – Albert Schweitzer¹

“Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ.”

1 Corinthians 11:1

If we are driven to simply modify our kid's behaviour in the short term, we may not be serving the long-term, ultimate goal of helping develop wisdom and Christ-like character in our kids.

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1 a 20th Century missionary and doctor

We, as parents, don't always get it right. That's a fact of life and being able to admit we need to keep growing as people, and to apologize to our kids, when necessary; this is key to allowing the parenting-journey to be one where God is growing us as well.

How we manage our own failure in life is one of the most important things that can help our kids become 'shame proof.' Even *that* is disciple-making.

Excursus: Corrective Discipline and Self-Discipline

"Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them."

Proverbs 13:24

Consider the emphasis in the Proverbs on the tongue, on controlling our anger (17:27) and on patience (14:29).

*"The one who has knowledge uses words with restraint, and whoever has understanding is **even-tempered**."*

Proverbs 17:27

*"Whoever is **patient** has great understanding, but one who is **quick tempered** displays folly."*

Proverbs 14:29

Corrective discipline must be in line with all the positive character traits we find here and avoid the negative ones. It will reflect the Fruit of the Spirit we find in the New Testament.

The emphasis of Proverbs 13:24 is not on the *means* of discipline, but to highlight and contrast that those who discipline their kids - that's loving them. Those who don't - that's equated with hating them.

In Psalm 23 we read how *"The Lord is my shepherd..."* and that includes His guidance and correction. The psalmist writes: *"Your rod [shevet (שֶׁבֶט) (SHAH-vet or SHEH-vet)] and staff, they give me comfort."* Here 'rod' is a metaphor for helpful course correction.

In a similar way that God, our good Shepherd, lovingly guides us, it's my job as a parent to be shepherding my kids - keeping them on the road - to course correct.

Is this text telling us that using physical force for discipline is *necessary*? My very short answer is 'no;' and I have some good reasons, both from interpreting these passages of scripture, and psychological research about why, for us, this is not the route we have taken as a family:

- As we look to the New Testament, we see an emphasis on non-violence.
- We don't see *any* text in the New Testament that endorses parents using corporal punishment.
- Perhaps the long arch of scripture points toward a different approach to discipline? Perhaps this is an area of 'discontinuity' between the Old and New Testaments?
- The most explicit text about discipline warns fathers not to "...exasperate their children..." in Ephesians 6. This means in our discipline, we don't provoke or discourage our kids beyond reason. It suggests that our consequences would make sense to our kids in the cold light of day.
- The Hebrew word for discipline doesn't just mean punishment. It means guidance, instruction, and correction. And the reason for the discipline is love.

"A fool spurns a parent's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence."

Proverbs 15:5

"Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid."

Proverbs 12:1

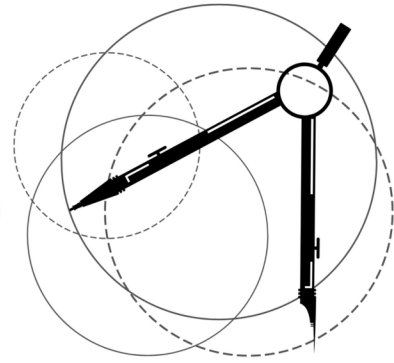
Those who want to grow in wisdom will accept discipline and correction. Those who don't, won't.

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Discussion



Reflection

Look again at Proverbs 3:11-12 and Hebrews 12:9-11.

- a. In what ways have you experienced God's discipline in your life?
- b. How has it shaped you to become a different sort of person?
- c. Take some time to give thanks to God for being a good shepherd, whose rod has helped guide and steer you.

Consider a time you received helpful, healthy correction? What were some of the features that made it 'work' for you?

How would you want to emulate the same in your call to be 'disciple-making' in whatever your current life-stage or role?

Prayer

Thank God for the good work He is doing in you, and in our community through His loving discipline. Ask God for what you need to be best equipped to be a discipline making person, which includes offering loving correction at times.

APPENDIX: HOW TO USE PROVERBS

This summer, our hope as a church is to steep ourselves in the wisdom of Proverbs. But this book invites a different approach than most others. The Book of Proverbs isn't meant to be speed-read—it's a book to sit with, to meditate on, to 'chew the cud,' as the rabbis would say.

- Chapters 1–9 serve as the introduction. They give us the book's purpose, a guiding epigraph (1:7), and ten speeches from a father to a son about wisdom. This section works well with a 'chapter-a-day' reading rhythm.
- Chapters 10–30 contain collections of short, poetic couplets. These proverbs are often loosely connected but are mostly designed to stand alone—ideal for slow, focused meditation and memorization.

GENERAL GOALS FOR READING THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Go Slow	Stop when something grabs your attention. Sit with it. If it takes three years to get through the book, that's perfectly fine.
Memorize Individual Proverbs	These sayings are written poetically so we can remember and apply them. Like the phrase "fail to plan and you plan to fail"—it sticks because of the way it's worded.
Read in Multiple Translations/Versions	English versions vary in how they handle the poetry. When meditating on a proverb, read it in several translations. While the King James Version isn't always clearest elsewhere, it often preserves the poetic force of Proverbs well, thanks to its translators' classical training.
Be Biased Toward Action	Proverbs are meant to be lived. The goal of meditation is obedience. If all you do this summer is live out one proverb, that's a win.

STRATEGIES FOR INTERNALIZING PROVERBS

Rewrite Proverbs in a Journal.	Use a general journal or a dedicated wisdom notebook. Rewriting helps with memorization and makes the proverb more personally accessible. You might even blend a few translations into a version that sticks best for you.
Put Them in Front of Your Eyes	Use sticky notes or other visible reminders. Place proverbs on your fridge, your desk, your mirror—anywhere you'll see them often.
Practice Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading)	<p>Read: Slowly read a chapter or section of Proverbs several times. Look for a verse that 'leaps off the page.'</p> <p>Meditate: Reflect on that proverb. What is it saying? Have you seen this truth in your life? Why might God be highlighting it now?</p> <p>Pray: Talk to God about what you're noticing. Ask for wisdom and strength to live it out.</p> <p>Contemplate: Spend a few quiet moments in God's presence, letting the proverb stick to your soul.</p>