

Biblical Philosophy Discipline

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“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.”, (Ecc 3:8) and might I suggest a time to learn that we might be not unfruitful. (Tit 3:14)

In order to maximize our potential for learning that which we are taught, discipline is of the utmost importance. Discipline is a biblical principle which is governed much by our submission and obedience to the Lord, which in turn is a gauge of our fellowship with the Lord.

Realizing this, we need to understand that discipline is a spiritual matter, not only in the fashion in which it is dealt out, but also in the spirit that it is received and reacted to. I mention this because I believe that the amount and course of discipline will often times be based upon the spiritual maturity of the audience. I understand that I cannot be dogmatic as to that statement, for many times we see unsaved children behaving

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- Proverbs 13:24

much better than those who profess to know Jesus Christ as Saviour. However, I do believe that many times if we look at the discipline in the unsaved home, most of the children who are well-behaved are products of parents who unknowingly employ “Christian” disciplinary guidelines. Also, I realize that there are children who come from Christian homes that do employ proper biblical discipline, and are still a behavior problem. It is in these situations, that I believe it is primarily a spiritual problem on behalf of the child.

In the book “How in this world can I be Holy?”, written by Erwin W. Lutzer, he begins by attempting to focus the reader on the subject, and makes the following statement. He states that in order to make life-style changes “It also involves an evaluation of ourselves, an evaluation that penetrates to the hidden thoughts and secret motivations of our heart.”.¹ I believe that this is the goal of discipline. The goal of discipline is not to cause pain, it is not to provoke servitude, it is not to intimidate, it is not even to cause one to conform to biblical moral standards. The purpose of discipline is however to assist in promoting the spiritual growth of a person, and that alone, will systematically change their heart condition, attitude, actions, reactions and behavior.

In Titus, Chapter 2 and verse 11, we see that “... the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men” and that by this we are taught something which is described in verse 12 as the act of denying ungodliness and worldly lusts. What I found interesting in verse 12, is that the word translated “Teaching”

¹ Lutzer, Erwin W., How in this World Can I Be Holy?, p. 9

comes from the Greek word *paideuō*, which means to train up a child, to educate or discipline by punishment, to chastise with instruction that they might learn. If the children are not taught and disciplined, how will they learn? How can we expect them to? We cannot expect behavior that is Godly, sober and righteous if they are not taught properly.

Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;
- Titus 2:12

Many of today's children are coming from homes in which the parents or guardians do not biblically love them. This is demonstrated by their lack of discipline. (Proverbs 13:24) I am not just speaking of unsaved homes. Unfortunately, due to worldly influences, even Christian parents are not biblically disciplining their children. This will make it more difficult not only in community outreach programs (i.e. Vacation Bible School) but also in today's Christian Day schools and other Christian venues. So then, by default, today's and tomorrow's Christian workers will face the challenge of disciplining undisciplined children.

I believe that not only is it our biblical responsibility to discipline, but it is also something that the children need and want. I believe they want someone to care about them, someone to love them, and someone to nurture them. That said, the first hurdle which needs to be cleared is one of a spiritual nature.

We all must agree that discipline is never an amusing or entertaining venture. I know now what my father ment, when he said “this is going to hurt me more than it’s going to hurt you”. However, as I stated earlier, if we truly love our own children and the children that the Lord gives us the privilege to minister to, we must employ discipline.

As the focus of many churches is shifting to ones “personal convictions’ and away from biblical standards, we see that discipline is one of the first doctrines that continues to be attacked.² Many of today’s “programs”, in both Christendom and secular circles, are built on a lack of discipline, under the disguise of giving children and even adults more “freedom” and “flexibility”. As a matter of fact, the

National Education Association (NEA) has stated, addressing parents, that “Physical punishment can be harmful to a child and

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does not accomplish the goal. Besides, no parent want their children to fear them.”³ Although physical punishment (spanking/paddling) will not be the avenue taken on most occasions, it is indeed a biblical one. This statement simply serves as a yardstick for the movement away from discipline by our society. The truth of the matter is, that freedom can only be found in Christ Jesus, through discipline.

² Allison, Mike, Preaching Standards: Right of Wrong?, p. 31

³ National Education Association, <http://www.nea.org/parents/tools/disc.html>

Discipline is necessary, and in doing so, we must follow the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He was prompt, dedicated, compassionate, sympathetic, loving and caring, to name a few qualities. His purpose is never, to harm us or drag us down, but rather to build us up and strengthen us so that we might serve him better. In each of the examples of chastisement in the Word of God, we can see clearly how our Lord saw a critical need for it. As such, our children, and those entrusted to our care, have a great and important need for it. The need mainly grows out of the child's need to learn-both mentally and spiritually. Without discipline, it is very difficult to learn mentally what is being taught, but more importantly, it is difficult to grow spiritually. If we do not grow spiritually, we diminish our ability to walk in close fellowship with our saviour. This lessens our availability to be used in God's service, and thus renders us unable to function in the perfect will of God. The end result of all this, is that we are then unable to bring God the glory that He is well deserving of. Discipline is not only necessary, it is critical as one expands their knowledge of things on earth, and biblical as one grows in obedience and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

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