

Chapter 10 Let's get practical

Because I truly believe a spanking at a young age can play a pivotal role in successfully shaping a rose bush, here are a few practical, in-depth exercises concerning spanking.

Proverbs 20:30

Blows and wounds cleanse away evil, and beatings purge the inmost being (*New International Version*).

Blows that wound cleanse away evil; beatings make clean the innermost parts (*New Revised Standard Version*).

Stripes that wound scour away evil and strokes reach the innermost parts (*New American Standard Bible*).

A good thrashing purges evil; punishment goes deep within us (*The Message*).

You are welcome to read other translations of this verse (although it is not put more mildly anywhere else!) and then answer the questions:

- What, according to this scripture, are grounds for a spanking?
- Does it seem from this scripture as if a spanking is aimed at changing behaviour or changing attitude?
- Does this scripture say anything about the intensity of an effective spanking?

Indicate, according to this Biblical mandate, the behaviour listed below that should or may lead to a spanking?

- defiance
- forgetfulness
- back-chatting
- carelessness – like losing possessions
- dangerous behaviour that threatens the child's or other people's safety
- challenging authority (refusal)
- hyperactivity and attention deficit disorder
- lies
- childishness
- wrongful disobedience
- impulsiveness
- wetting the bed
- accidents – such as knocking over a glass at the table

- temper tantrums
- behaviour caused by shyness – such as not greeting people politely
- violence against others
- manipulation
- a slow work pace

Proverbs 23:13-14 and 29:15-17

Don't be afraid to correct your young ones; a spanking won't kill them. A good spanking, in fact, might save them from something worse than death (*The Message*).

Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod and deliver his soul from hell (*New King James Version*).

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way, brings shame to his mother. Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; he will also delight your soul (*New American Standard Bible*).

Wise discipline imparts wisdom; spoiled adolescents embarrass their parents. Discipline your children; you'll be glad you did – they'll turn out delightful to live with (*The Message*).

The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother. Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul (*New International Version*).

Indicate which of the following statements are true or false after you have thought about or discussed the scriptures:

- In the Bible the word "discipline" is strongly related to a spanking. **T/F**
- A spanking is viewed as an acceptable way of correcting. **T/F**
- A spanking is recommended in situations where children need to be corrected. **T/F**
- A spanking is especially recommended for young children. **T/F**
- The Bible leaves room for discipline without spanking. **T/F**
- If we never give our children a spanking, this could make us an accessory if they go astray. **T/F**
- We should only spank gently and with care. **T/F**
- A Biblical spanking can easily break a child. **T/F**
- The fact that warning and punishment are both mentioned here means that I sometimes have to talk rather than spank. **T/F**
- If I don't like spanking, I don't have to do it. **T/F**
- I deserve the disgrace my children bring on me if I wasn't strict with them from the beginning. **T/F**
- A spanking leads to pleasantness in the long run, even if it is unpleasant in the thick of things. **T/F**
- We must use our hand so that we don't unintentionally go too far. **T/F**

Many who oppose corporal punishment accuse Solomon (and God) of cruelty and want to proverbially throw out the “corporal punishment” baby with the Old Testament bathwater. However, Proverbs is a Book of Wisdom, brimful of lessons in self-control, gentle words, compassion for others, and advice that anger is foolishness. It was against this backdrop that a spanking was advocated. Therefore, it goes without saying that the Bible doesn’t give us the right to do any of the following:

- grab a rod without thinking
- hit other people’s children
- hit a child in anger
- hit until you feel better
- hit in retaliation
- hit without the child knowing what it is about
- punch with the fists or slap a child in the face.

These scriptures address parents’ fear of spanking. They also reassure parents that it really doesn’t harm a child; in fact, it protects him. Why do you think it is pertinently emphasised here? I believe it is for the reasons listed below. Think about it or discuss it with someone until you are sure of your own convictions: Because ...

- the Lord know that parents don’t really want to hit their children
- if one always wants to be loving towards your children it is difficult to spank them
- there are people who think a spanking and child abuse are synonymous
- many parents want to protect their child’s body more than their child’s undying spirit
- some parents think you will break children’s spirits by warming their backsides
- the Lord will hold us accountable if we don’t discipline firmly
- already in Biblical times there were people who opposed a spanking, and the Lord knows this will never change.

There are many differences between parents who abuse their children and parents who advocate a Biblical spanking:

The first group of parents are usually uninvolved, indulgent(!), emotionally detached from their children, and uninterested in good parenting practices. They don’t like being involved in the daily needs and nurturing of their children, but when their children frustrate them they are likely to overreact.

Research has found that child abusers seldom touch their children lovingly. There is little contact expect for the abuse. These parents don’t take their parenting task seriously. Their children are an emotional, physical, financial, and practical burden to them and are “punished” for this (for example, shaken if they cry too much), or the children are their property that they can treat as they wish (“I brought you into this world and I will help you out of it if you don’t do what I say!”) Physical violence doesn’t occur in isolation but is part of a pattern of abuse that could include verbal aggression, neglect, and sexual abuse. Parents who spank in the Biblical way, on the other hand, are usually involved, loving parents who have emotional bonds

with their children and a realisation of the importance of their parenting task. They spank because they are obedient and expect that the promises of the Lord will hold true. They see their children as gifts or loans for which they will be held accountable.

Children's experience of punishment is based on their experience of their relationship with their parents. A child who feels safe in a loving home will experience even a severe spanking with a leather belt as positive (in retrospect, of course!), while an abused child will experience a rude word as a shattering humiliation. We will fail to appreciate this important fact if we make laws that equate everyone's experiences.

If we want corporal punishment to be made illegal because some parents can't control themselves, we should also make other physical contact with our children illegal, because what will happen if some parents can't control their hugs and kisses? What is worse, a spanking that is taken too far or physical intimacy that is taken too far? Or should we, while we're at it, chop off parents' hands, shut their mouths, and make it illegal for parents to say no to their children? If you think I sound far-fetched now, you should read up on the American movement called *Peaceful Parenting*. That is exactly what they are trying to achieve. They want to remove a whole bunch of words from a parent's vocabulary. These include words like "wrong," "no," and "don't." They base this on accusations of emotional abuse, the violation of human rights, and other humanistic ideas.

Abuse is already illegal. However, the law has never been able to prevent it. A law against spanking in a family context will also not prevent bad parenting; it will only prevent good parents from acting wisely, parents who have self-control and who have the best interests of their children at heart.

- **For what behaviour do you give a spanking, even if a child would not be spanked for this in terms of Biblical principles?**
- **For what behaviour do you not give a spanking, even if the Bible recommends a spanking for this?**
- **Why do you feel your punishment works better for this behaviour than a spanking would?**
- **Do you spank with calmness and control, or do you "lose it"?**

Which of the following messages will be conveyed by a controlled, calm spanking (C) and which ones by an angry spanking (A)? Indicate them and contemplate how you should adapt your way of spanking.

- Your behaviour is unacceptable. C/A
- I am very angry now. C/A
- I don't like you. C/A
- I will feel better after hitting you. C/A
- I will feel the same whether I spank you or not, because it is not about me. C/A

- I spank out of conviction. C/A
- I spank to teach you something. C/A
- I spank to hurt you. C/A
- I still love you. C/A
- I love you when you behave and hate you when you misbehave. C/A
- I punish you because I have to, even when I don't feel like it. C/A
- I don't like punishing you. C/A

Think about the behaviours for which you unnecessarily give spankings. Write down an alternative for each of them. Remember that one does not always have to punish. Sometimes one just has to instruct better!

Behaviour

I am rather going to ...