
Your Child's Discipline

Proverbs⁸

Russ Kennedy

Imagine a world in which:

Parents were reared largely without Biblical discipline...

Parents were filled with lies and myths about children...

Parents were skeptical if not scornful of Biblical child-rearing...

Parents were threatened by the culture and the legal system to avoid Biblical discipline...

We are reaping the fruit of foolishness and sin as parents. Listen to the opening warning to those who refuse the wisdom of Proverbs. Take warning and take heart:

Proverbs 1:22-31

²² "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?
How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing
and fools hate knowledge?

²³ If you turn at my reproof,
behold, I will pour out my spirit to you;
I will make my words known to you.

²⁴ Because I have called and you refused to listen,
have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded,

²⁵ because you have ignored all my counsel
and would have none of my reproof,

²⁶ I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when terror strikes you,

²⁷ when terror strikes you like a storm
and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,
when distress and anguish come upon you.

²⁸ Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer;
they will seek me diligently but will not find me.

²⁹ Because they hated knowledge
and did not choose the fear of the Lord,

³⁰ would have none of my counsel
and despised all my reproof,

⁸ Unless otherwise designated, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

³¹ therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way,
and have their fill of their own devices.

The Purpose of Care and Correction

Its Primary Aim

To rear a child in such a way as to instill a developing wisdom and to correct a developing folly.

Proverbs 1:1-7

¹ The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:

² To know wisdom and instruction,
to understand words of insight,

³ to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity;

⁴ to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—

⁵ Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, ⁶ to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles.

⁷ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 9:10

¹⁰ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

Wisdom begins when we learn the *fear of the Lord*. The fear of the Lord is living a life aware of God, a Godward life. It will give rise to an intentional response to the essence of God that moves one to godly living. It involves a choice and is frequently linked with obedience (Proverbs 1:29). It results in a prolonged life (Proverbs 10:27). The wicked sin because they do not fear the Lord.

Its Basic Understanding

In this book of Bible, discipline is synonymous with teaching and training, with care and correction. The goal of discipline is a wise child who will accept correction and discipline from the Lord because he or she has learned to respond correctly to parental correction and discipline. Just as there is a progression in sinfulness (from the naïve to the scoffer to the fool (Proverbs 1:22)), there is to be corresponding discipline, beginning with teaching, then verbal reproof, and finally physical punishment.

The model for discipline is the Lord's loving relationship with believers (Proverbs. 3:11-12; Hebrews. 12:4-13).

¹¹ My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

Its Grave Urgency

Proverbs 22:6

⁶ Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

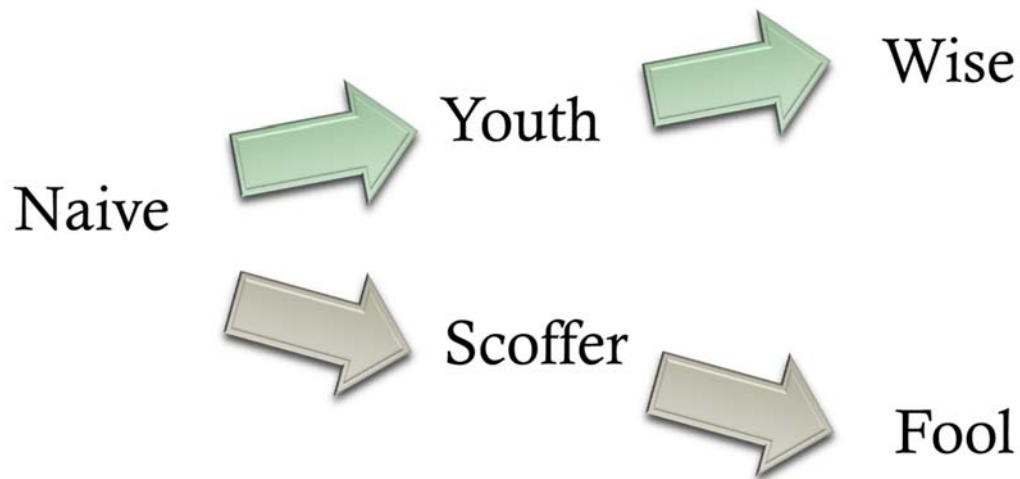
This text emphasizes the importance of training the child at the beginning of his or her life. The word *train* was also used in reference to the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:63). It is a word that speaks of setting the trajectory in the first instruction and discipline given to children. Biblical child rearing is done in the hope of setting the child apart unto the Lord. The emphasis is on the advantage of early training in the ways of the Lord. This verse is not a promise but a challenge to parents to set their child out on the right path early in life.

The Principles of Care and Correction

Let's consider some basic principles observed from the book of Proverbs.

The Progression to Wisdom and Foolishness

There is a progression that our parenting needs to understand.



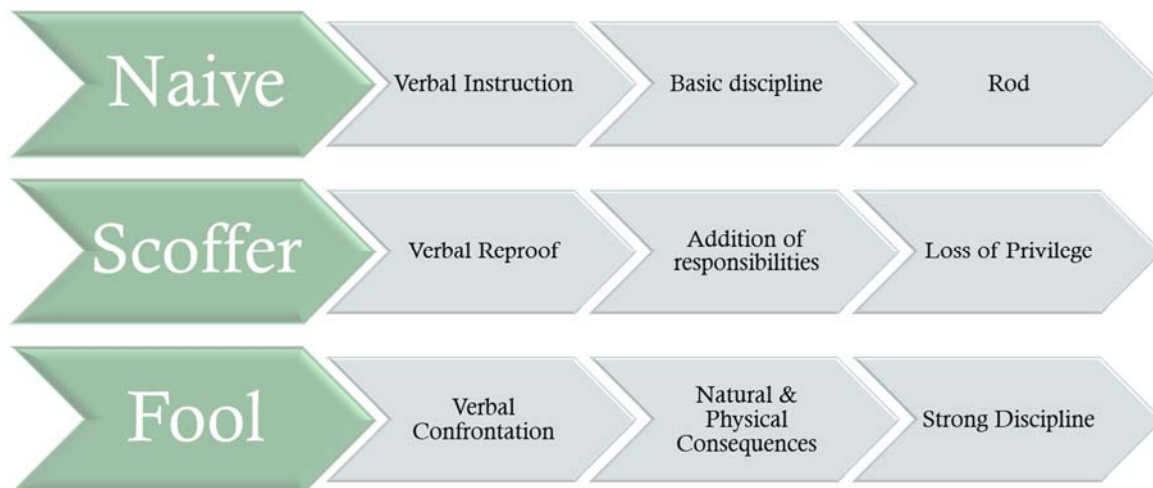
The naïve is a person (child, youth or adult) who does not understand the connection between cause and effect, between choices and consequences. The naïve person then has little fear of God or apprehension about sinners.

The youth is someone who, with care and correction, is learning to become wise. However, the scoffer is a person who has grown to disdain authority and ridicules what leads to wisdom.

The fool is someone who, having rejected all that leads to wisdom, continues to make foolish decisions and rejects the consequences of actions. One of the consequences is that a fool often cannot predict future consequences from past or present choices.

The Characteristics of Wise And Foolish Children

WISE CHILD	FOOLISH CHILD
Obedient (Proverbs 23:22)	Disobedient (Proverbs 15:5)
Accepts discipline, reproof (Proverbs 13:1; 15:5)	Despises parental reproof (Proverbs 13:1; 15:5)
Discerning (Proverbs 28:7)	right in own eyes (Proverbs 12:15)
Brings joy (Proverbs 23:24-25; 29:3a)	Causes grief and distress (Proverbs 10:1; 17:21, 25)
Good, honorable behavior (Proverbs 8:20)	Shameful, disgraceful behavior (Proverbs 19:26; 28:7)
Honors, blesses parents (Exodus 20:12; Pro. 31:28)	Despises, curses parents (Proverbs 15:20; 20:20; 30:17)
Life may be prolonged (Proverbs 10:27; 12:28)	Life may be cut short (Proverbs 12:28; 20:20)

Levels of Child Training

The Wisdom of Proverbs on Care and Correction

Proverbs 23:24 – Joy in wise children...

The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him.

Proverbs 20:11 – Children known by their actions...

Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.

Proverbs 19:18 - Discipline while there is hope...

Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.

Proverbs 13:24 – Love and hate exposed by discipline...

Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

Proverbs 22:15 – The rod of discipline expels heart folly...

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

Proverbs 23:13-14 – The rod is not to be withheld...

Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.

Proverbs 29:15 – A mother shamed by undisciplined child

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

Proverbs 29:17 – Discipline your son...

Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.

Proverbs 15:5 – Foolish children despise parental instruction

A fool despises his father's instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent.

The Rod in Care and Correction

Adapted from Greg Cook.

What is the Rod?

It is an implement appropriate for the age of the child that is applied to the buttocks.

It can be a paddle, a wooden spoon or something similar.

It should not be something worn by the parents; that is, not a belt.

It should rarely if ever be the parent's hand.

It is never to the face.

It is applied with enough force to bring pain, but not cause harm.

It is obedience to the Scripture

In Proverbs it is a command.

As an act of faith for the parents

It believes God's commands and acts accordingly.

It seeks to rescue children from self and sin.

In hope that God will grant grace through the discipline

Prepares the child for the Gospel

Softens the heart

Opens the ears

Brings dependence on God

It begins to install wisdom until the Wisdom, the Lord Jesus is introduced.

How to Spank your Child

Take your child to a private place

Respects your child and does not unnecessarily humiliate them

Tell your child specifically what they did wrong

Be sure they understand so they will accept the chastening

Be sure that they understand so they will obey in the future

Be sure that they understand the connection between choices and consequences

Bring your child to acknowledge what they have done

Remind them that you are not spanking them out of anger, rather you are obeying God.

Tell them how many swats they are going to receive

Restore the child to fellowship

Is the child angry or rebellious?

Has the child submitted and accepted the discipline?

Is the child ready to be restored?

Has the discipline produced peace and righteousness?

False means of discipline

You are always training your child; the question is: are you doing it with Biblical aims and Biblical means.

False threats

Unkept promises

Improper use of good means (grounding, time-outs) as a substitute for Biblical discipline.

Sinful emotional manipulation using ungodly speech.

We want a discipline that is short and has a defined end. This allows for restoration.

Questions:

1. When is a child to be spanked?

Defiance

Disobedience

2. At what age should a child be spanked?

Starts when a child expresses rebellion

Transitions to counsel as a child learns self-control

As a child matures, there should be more and more interaction

3. Should we spank in public?

Generally, no

But the child still be rebuked and warned

4. What about time-outs?

Challenges whether God knows what is best

Does not move toward quick resolution

Reflect and Respond

Discuss with your spouse or friend the way you do discipline. Does it line up with Scriptures?

Repent of unbiblical discipline and return to following the Bible.

Ask God and your children for forgiveness for disobeying God and for sinning against them.