

Disciplining a Child

By Douglas Wood

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read Exodus 20:12 and Ephesians 6:2. Prepare to share some ways children can honor their fathers and mothers.

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Ephesians 6:3 in the section **It's in the Book**. The phrase “go well” can also mean “live well.” Prepare to share some attributes of “living well.”

Assignment Three

Prepare to share three forms of parental discipline that seem consistent with Scripture. Also share how each of those types of discipline can be loving in the life of a child.

Scripture to Memorize

“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.”
Proverbs 22:6

Session Goal

Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will know some of the ways a parent can discipline a child according to biblical principles.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Your friend, Keith, has a father who does not believe in “sparing the rod” when Keith makes a mistake. Keith is seventeen years old and sometimes has welts from the discipline he receives. You know the Bible says parents are to discipline their children, but the details of Keith’s situation bother you.

How does Scripture guide you on the question of discipline?

Read Ephesians 6:1–4 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 1. Children, obey. This instruction in Ephesians is a direct reference to the sixth commandment, passed down through Moses on a stone tablet. The commandment was a central part of God’s design for families. Scripture makes more than one hundred references to the powerful concept of *obeying*.

Discussion Question

Is there ever a time or a reason for a child not to obey his parents?

Verse 1. right. God has established a sense of order in His creation. This divine order has a “rightness” to it. Being right with God is exactly the position in which a believer wishes to be.

Verse 2. Honor your father and mother. This is the sixth commandment and the first with a promise.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week may now share some ways teenagers can honor their fathers and mothers.

Discussion Question

What attitudes can you pray children in your church will have toward their parents when they are preschoolers? when they are teenagers?

On Your Own

What is the promise God makes when He gives the sixth commandment? In the space below, write what you think the promise means.

Studying the Passage

Verse 3. Well with you. God uses this term repeatedly in the Scriptures. He admonishes the people not to eat that which he declares not good for them, so that it will “go well” with them and their sons (Deuteronomy 12:25). Jeremiah said to obey the Lord so that it may “go well” with you (Jerimiah 7:23). Israel was told to listen to God and to do what He asked so that it would “go well” with them (Deuteronomy 6:3).

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week may now share some attributes of “living well.”

Discussion Question

Practically speaking, why is someone who honors and respects parents more likely to live well?

Studying the Passage

Verse 3. live long. Is there anyone who does not wish to live long? Mankind has a desire to live long and live well.

Discussion Question

Practically speaking, why is someone who honors and respects parents more likely to live long?

Studying the Passage

Verse 4. provoke. *Provoke* means “to cause someone to become angry.” God instructed His people not to provoke their enemies (see Deuteronomy 2:4–5). As He led them out of Egyptian captivity, He reminded His people that their rebellion had provoked the Lord to wrath (see Deuteronomy 9:7). God instructs fathers and mothers to be careful and not to provoke their children to anger because the results will not be good. **bring them up.** God chose Abraham to bring up children in the ways of the Lord (see Genesis 18:19). God continued such a calling through all the pages of the Bible and even to this present day. Rather than provoking their children to anger, God calls parents to bring up children for His kingdom and His glory.

On Your Own

In the space below, write briefly some ways parents could introduce their children to Christ, disciple them, encourage them to have hearts of compassion, evangelism and missions, help them find God’s specific calling, etc.

Read Proverbs 3:11-12 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 11. do not despise the LORD’s discipline. All disciples are instructed to welcome discipline and correction from God. They do so because God is sovereign, but they also do so because it is to their advantage.

Verse 12. For the LORD reproves him whom He loves. God knows that His discipline, correction and instruction are a benefit to His children. Therefore, He does those things as a way of expressing His infinite love toward those children. **as a father the son in whom he delights.** A wise parent also knows that discipline will be a great advantage to children. Therefore, love is the motivation behind that discipline. The absence of discipline is the opposite of love. Discipline molds and strengthens character, self-control and willpower—all under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share three forms of parental discipline that seem consistent with Scripture and how each of those types of discipline is loving in the life of a child.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again **the Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Few enjoy discipline, but where would athletes be without the discipline to practice and perfect their skills? Where would musicians be without the discipline of practice and rehearsal? Where would a Christian be without spiritual discipline? And where would a child be without the discipline of parents?

The Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). That training includes discipline. God has given both parents and children specific instructions about such discipline.

- Children are to obey their parents (Ephesians 6:1).
- Children are to honor their fathers and mothers (Ephesians 6:2). This is the sixth commandment. Children who obey and honor parents tend to live well and live long on the earth (Ephesians 6:3).
- Parents are not to provoke their children to anger (Ephesians 6:4a).
- Parents are to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4b).

Both parents and children have responsibilities related to God's commands.

A parent should remember that no outside group, church or youth ministry should take the place of parental responsibility. God has placed parents in first position related to spiritual leadership, instruction and discipline of their children.

Parents should recall God's caution that they not provoke their children to anger. This means discipline should be within biblical boundaries. This also means listening to their children, respecting them, encouraging them, blessing them and deeply knowing them.

Children have a biblical mandate to honor and obey their parents. If they do, they will tend to have a long and rewarding life that glorifies God and brings His kingdom more on the earth.

God is the architect of the family. Wise disciples heed His Word in molding their families through His instruction and His discipline.

Follow up Question

How should a parent discipline their children, and why?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.