

Disciplining Our Children

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[0 : 00] Well, we're continuing this morning in our study of the masculine mandate, and particularly taking the truth of it, the theological reality that we see set forth before us in the word and applying it to various areas of our lives.

So, as a refresher to us, let's remember this masculine mandate is rooted in Genesis 2.15, where we read, The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it. So, there we see God's purpose for the first man, Adam, and we see in God's word how it extends to us as men that we too are called to work and to keep.

And in many ways, we can take that framework of the masculine mandate and apply it to fatherhood, which we began doing two weeks ago as Pastor Jeremy began our two-part study of fatherhood, the raising of our children.

So, we are, as the study two weeks ago, we are primarily focusing on fathers with young children, fathers with children still in the home and therefore under their authority.

[1 : 13] And we want to see how the framework for the masculine mandate specifically applies to this particular stage of fatherhood. So, we are to work and to keep in a general sense.

And what does that look like as fathers? Well, the argument that Richard Phillips in his book, The Masculine Mandate, makes is this. That looks like discipling and disciplining.

Discipling and disciplining. As it relates to our children, to work is to disciple them and to keep is to discipline them. Now, two weeks ago, Pastor Jeremy helped us to think through the first part of that, the discipling of our children.

And you remember, as we've studied, the masculine mandate to work is to cultivate. To work is to nurture. And that is what it means as we disciple our children.

We are cultivating the soil of their hearts. We are saying, as Proverbs 23, 26 says, give me your heart. And then Pastor Jeremy helped us to think very practically about what does that look like in the life of our homes with our children.

[2 : 21] And there were those four words that were unpacked. We read with them. We pray with them. We work with them. And we play with them. Well, this week, we're now considering the disciplining of our children.

And working and keeping. They go hand in hand. So, nurturing the hearts of our children and protecting the hearts of our children also should go hand in hand.

Vital to the protecting of our children's hearts is disciplining them. Now, let's think for a moment about that. How is it, why is it that protecting our children would involve disciplining them?

We may not naturally associate discipline with protection. Well, think of the dangers to our children. Many external dangers that they face.

Many pressures, societal pressures that they face. And yet, the greatest danger to our children is their own sinful hearts.

[3 : 27] Yes, children's hearts are indeed sinful. Psalm 51.5 says, Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

And Ted Tripp, a well-known author and pastor, he actually spoke at the ski retreat a few years back. If we recall, I don't know how old we all were then.

Maybe some of us weren't there, maybe we were. Ted Tripp says this, There are things within the heart of the sweetest little baby that allowed to blossom and grow to fruition will bring about eventual destruction.

I don't want that destruction for my children. None of us fathers, Christian fathers, would desire that destruction for our children. So we seek to protect their hearts.

And as Richard Phillips says, To protect their hearts from seeking to satisfy their own sinful cravings. Now, of course, the ultimate protection for our children from that eventual destruction that Ted Tripp speaks of is the salvation of our children.

[4 : 31] Like us, they must be saved from the penalty for their sins. And that salvation only comes through the Lord Jesus Christ. So we point them to Christ. We teach them of Christ.

We tell them of Christ. We cannot save our children. They must repent and believe just as we must repent and believe. This gift, if salvation comes from God, it's given to them just as it was to us. But there is much that we can do and much that we should do that God has called us to do as fathers to shepherd our children, to lead our children to the Savior.

As we saw two weeks ago, we have a very clear directive, many from the Word, but this one we saw last week, Ephesians 6.4. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

So we have this responsibility to bring them up in this God-honoring way, in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. The Old Testament also speaks to this responsibility that we have.

[5 : 41] Proverbs, which speaks frequently of discipline and the need for it and the goodness of it. Proverbs 22.6, a very well-known proverb as well, says, train up a child in the way that he should go.

Even when he's old, he will not depart from it. Now, often when this proverb is quoted, there's a focus on the second part, clarifying that this is a general principle, that there is no training that guarantees the salvation of our children.

That's true, for sure. But I think at least maybe with my generation, the emphasis on that has led to missing the first half of the proverb, which is this, that God says there is a specific way our children are to go, and our training should reflect that.

We are to train up a child in the way he should go. Emphasis on the word should. It's not train up a child in the way that he could go, like there's many possible ways, many options, many good ones. We're just kind of presenting one, like life is some kind of choose-your-own adventure. That's what Satan absolutely wants us to think. That's what he's convinced the world to think.

[6 : 57] But that's not what the Bible says. It's not train up your child in the way that he could go. It's should go. And it's just this one way. It's God's way. It's not train up your child in the various ways that are good that he could go, but the one way that is good.

There's a right way to go, and then everything else is the wrong way. So we are to train up our child, our children, to go the right way. Well, who says which way that is?

Who says which way is right that our children should go? God does. We train up our children according to what God says. Or to put it back into the New Testament language, which we bring up our children in the discipline, or as the NIV translates that word, the training and instruction of the Lord.

So there we see it. This is discipline and instruction that is of the Lord. It's his prescribed discipline. It's his prescribed instruction.

And it is our responsibility to bring up our children according to that discipline and instruction. We're to train them in the way they should go. And again, like we saw two weeks ago, the goal is not just behavior modification.

[8 : 12] No, we want our children's hearts. We want to see our children give their hearts to the Lord, and we are responsible for protecting their hearts, protecting them from external dangers, and seeking to protect them from internal dangers, which brings us to the importance of discipline.

So let's talk about what we mean by discipline. To discipline is to correct and restrain our children's sin. Again, this is part of the keeping element of the masculine mandate.

We are to protect our children. And the most important protection that we can provide is protection from their own sinful hearts. Well, how do we do that? By correcting and restraining their sin.

Because by nature, they have rebellious, wayward hearts, as any lost person does. There are many examples in the Old Testament of wayward children.

Children who rebelled against not just their parents, but against, of course, God Himself. And these were children of godly parents, like David. King David had sons who very much went astray.

[9 : 25] We might naturally think of Absalom. You recall Absalom led the rebellion against David. He tried to rip the kingdom from David. David had to flee for his life because of Absalom.

But Absalom isn't the only son of David that sinned greatly against David and against God. Another son of his, the son born after Absalom.

Adonijah also did when David was old, when David was near to death, but not yet dead, which is very important. He is still living. He is still king.

Adonijah led his own sort of rebellion. He said, I'm going to be king. And he sought to make himself just that. The writer of First Kings gives us a window into why this happened.

Of course, Adonijah was responsible for his own sin. He was responsible for the life that he was leading. But listen to how the writer of First Kings helps us to see David's own failure in raising his son.

[10:28] So First Kings chapter 1, beginning in verse 5. Now Adonijah, the son of Haggith, and Haggith is one of David's wives. So Adonijah, the son of Haggith, exalted himself, saying, I will be king.

And he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen and 50 men to run before him. Verse 6. His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, why have you done thus and so?

He was also a very handsome man and he was born next after Absalom. So we see that Adonijah is aggressive, that he's self-promoting, that Adonijah is exalting himself.

He's quick to try to grab power for himself. And there's this reason given. His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, why have you done thus and so?

Your translation might say, and I think a little more smoothly, his father had never interfered with him by asking, why do you behave as you do? In other words, David had never disciplined his son.

[11:37] He had never corrected him. He let him go his own way, have his own way. He didn't interfere with him. We don't know why, but that is what we read.

Whatever the reason, 1 Kings tells us of David's failure as a father to train up his son in the way that he should go. Now perhaps Adonijah would have still led that rebellion. That's entirely possible.

But how David should have intervened, how David should have sought to correct him. And the writer of 1 Kings tells us he didn't. So as expected, Adonijah didn't go the way that he should go.

And we can trace Adonijah's rebellious behavior in adulthood back to a lack of any discipline even in childhood it would seem. Now we might argue, well it doesn't say childhood, but it does say never in the ESV.

And then it says also at any time. Never at any time. That's a strong way of putting it. Richard Phillips says, David failed to discipline his sons personally.

[12:40] Never investing himself in the oversight of their proper conduct. This account in 1 Kings is a clear reminder, it's a sobering reminder to us of how important it is that we keep our children by disciplining them in childhood.

Now this idea of discipline assumes something very important that God has given us authority over them, over our children. And he has, again, Ephesians 6 tells us this, both in the instructions to us as fathers, but even more clearly in the instructions to our children.

Ephesians 6.1 says that they are to obey us and so we are to discipline them when they don't obey. So obedience is what we are after when it comes to discipline.

And of course we don't mean merely outward obedience, just behavior modification. We desire that our children would give their hearts to Christ and obey Him from the heart.

But even before conversion, we are still seeking obedience because that is good for our children.

Obedience to us as parents, living under our authority, is good for our children because that's living according to God's way.

[13:56] And God's way is always good. God's way is always best for parents and for children. So we living in obedience to what God says and children called to live in obedience to what God says.

God's way brings life. So when our children disobey and they go against God's way, the loving thing to do is to discipline them. Richard Phillips makes a very helpful point.

He says that our children will be ruled by someone or something. That they will be ruled. He says if we do not rule our children, sin certainly will.

And then he quotes Jeremiah 17.9 The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. The last thing that we as Christian fathers want is for our children to be ruled by their sinful hearts.

So Richard Phillips rightly concludes, we do not permit our children to be ruled by their hearts but by their parents representing however imperfectly God and his word.

[15:03] So we are indeed seeking obedience from our children because God is granted to us as fathers authority and with that authority comes great responsibility in how we are to exercise our authority.

How we are to wield that authority. So while we do seek obedience from our children, we also must seek something from ourselves. We must seek self-control.

How we discipline our children matters immensely. We are sinning ourselves if we mistreat our children as we discipline them for their sin. We are offending God.

We are provoking our children and exasperating them and setting a poor example to them as not just their fathers but as Christian fathers. We are undermining our authority in those moments and giving them a poor picture of God who we desire would be their father, their heavenly father.

So angry outbursts, harsh words, a lack of patience, even being physically rough with our children, perhaps grabbing at our child or using the rod more forcefully than we should.

[16:14] There are all kinds of ways that we can sinfully mistreat our children and we must not excuse or minimize or downplay that kind of sinful behavior.

We are called to exercise self-control not just when it's easy but when it's hard. And our children can present some very challenging moments for us but it's in those very moments when our self-control is tested and needed.

So let's talk then very practically about what discipline looks like. There are many times when we correct with our words alone.

A verbal rebuke. A perhaps just a look. I remember even years ago in a church with a pastor whose children would sit in the front and he one time paused in a sermon and gave the look and that's all that he needed to quiet down his children.

But other times especially when there is direct disobedience physical reproof is necessary or as the Bible calls it the rod.

[17:23] Now the world equates the rod or spanking with child abuse and I understand there absolutely is a line that cannot and should not be crossed. Spanking can be child abuse but there are many good things that can be distorted.

Many good things. Spanking can be distorted but simply because it can be distorted doesn't mean that we stop doing it altogether. Especially when God has given such explicit instructions for us to use it to use the rod.

It's very ironic to me that we live in a day when it is somewhat socially acceptable for a mother or a father to yell at their children in public like in the grocery store.

I'm sure that we've seen parents just laying into their children stop grabbing that don't do that if you do it one more time you're going to be in big trouble.

I mean there are times that parents can be screaming perhaps at a child angry obviously angry with their children and yet it's not a moment where there's intervention but the mother or the father calmly leaving the grocery store taking his or her child to the van clearly and lovingly pointing out their sin using God's word to do it pointing their child to the savior and physically reproofing their child in the van cramped up very difficult but doing it faithful to do it that though by the world is deemed to be child abuse that kind of God honoring behavior could draw the attention of CPS but the screaming parent just losing it on their child in the store well people rationalize life's hard kids drive us crazy so we all get it we've all been there no that kind of rationalization is crazy and it's wrong that is not

[19:32] God's way so in those two scenarios think about the impact on the child the angry parent yelling in the store isn't touching the child most of the time so it's true no physical pain but what else is the child experiencing in that moment overwhelming shame and embarrassment now don't get me wrong sin should bring a sense of shame and embarrassment but that should be a tool that God uses to lead us to Christ that's not the shame and embarrassment that this child is experiencing that child is just being torn down made to feel so small so isolated from his or her parent made to feel that his or her parent is against him or her for sure feeling that as they're being laid into but what about the child whose father doesn't raise his voice doesn't lambast the child in the store but takes his child to the privacy of the van that child it's true is going to experience pain a measure of pain not excessive not abusive but there will be pain but that pain will be very purposeful as proverbs 29 15 says the rod of correction imparts wisdom but a child left to himself disgraces his mother proverbs 13 14 actually says whoever spares the rod hates his son but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him so

God has designed physical reproof to have a good effect it imparts wisdom it's a natural means by which our children use knowledge they learn to use knowledge well it's a natural means by which they learn to make better decisions in life in very simple terms the child thinks you know last time that spanking hurt when I was at the grocery store and I wouldn't put the candy back so this time now as I'm going to grab that candy you know I'm not going to grab that candy now maybe they don't think through it all that perfectly but there is training that has taken place that's a child who has learned wisdom now all of us dads can speak from experience that wisdom isn't always learned in this perfectly linear fashion for our children there's growth and then there's some regression there's obedience displayed in one outing and disobedience in the next but over time there is this upward trajectory of growth in our children's lives as they learn obedience just as we learn obedience often or truly in this fashion so don't lose heart in our discipline of our children even in our physically reproofing them it's for their good the pain is purposeful it imparts wisdom so that child brought out of the grocery store to the van he experiences pain but it's a purposeful pain just as our discipline from our heavenly father is purposeful pain too

Hebrews 12:11 says for the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it so that pain is good for our children its goal is to produce this peaceful fruit of righteousness but the pain isn't all that this child experiences in the van or should experience this godly father is not merely executing this cold transaction just silently bringing his son to the van closing the door behind them and giving him his deserved swats on the bottom no if we're doing this god's way there's loving exhortation he speaks the truth in love to his son he tells his son of his great need for the savior he tells his son that he too needs this same savior so what a difference between the parent who didn't spank and the parent who did now I understand there are many parents who don't spank that don't behave like a madman in the grocery store there's a whole gentle parenting movement now that we don't have time to get into we could analyze all kinds of styles but at the end of the day we simply want to be biblical in the raising of our children and physical reproof is biblical so let's not buy the lie that spanking is evil that spanking is so very outdated how could anyone still do that today we can't unapologetically because God tells us to and as fathers we're under his authority do any of us hate our sons do we hate our sons if we do well then we can spare the rod we've got a pass on sparing the rod but if we hate our sons we have a whole bigger deeper heart issue at work that we must deal with if we don't hate our sons though then we will not spare the rod just as proverbs 13:14 says whoever spares the rod hates his son but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him now all of that being said let's talk about how we use the rod now there is much that could be said about this there is much that was said in the!

parenting class that many of you with young children were in so we're not going into great detail here this morning but Richard Phillips gives us five pointers for how to use the rod in what he calls a controlled and highly intentional manner so pointer number one seek privacy like the father in the grocery store we should take our children to the van or if we're at home we should take them to the bedroom or to the bathroom especially if there's siblings love to know what's going on so often they don't care what's going on until there's a moment of discipline now we're really interested what wrong has been committed what's the punishment so we need to seek privacy pointer number two make the offense known we should be clear with our children we should want we want to be sure that they know the reason they are being spanked again this is not this cold silent treatment of our children we're not just spanking them because no here's why we're seeking to be on the same page as much as we can be that they might know what the offense is and then related to that pointer number three require the offense to be acknowledged so our children need to learn confession of sin they need to acknowledge their wrongdoing they should own up to their sin that's helping them to develop humility if we are doing all of the talking what could be going on in our children's heads they're stewing maybe they're not saying it out loud but they're thinking this is unjust so we want to help them to see and to acknowledge that this physical reproof is due to their sin very particular sin that we're dealing with number four embrace reassure!

and exhort! So after spanking this is so important our aim is not to end with pain but with a clear show of love and affection a reminder that we are for them that God readily offers forgiveness through Christ and how we desire our children to run to them to him I think of so often my own failures in pitting myself against my children as though the greatest offense is what was done to me no I want them to see that the offense is ultimately against God and I am for them and wanting to see them turn from their sin fail at that all the time Richard Phillips says here's a rule I try very hard

to follow I will always be on my children's side even if I am punishing I will never be against them and I will never speak to them with contempt and then pointer number five repeat as necessary so the goal is that our children acknowledge their sin and accept!

[28 : 16] the correction! Now something I'm going to add to that and I'm saying this because this is my own experience readily owning that I can exasperate my children so we can be in the bathroom working through their sin administering a spank and by all accounts we're ready to move on and then I pastor that I am ready to preach a sermon and we're prolonging this conversation and I can make it go on longer than needed and make my child feel like he's in prison I'm lecturing him I'm asking a litany of questions and before long what's happened with him he's worked up all over again we've already had the spanking he's calmed down and yet I've continued to detain him so we have spanking because their heart was still so very hard after the first spanking or perhaps

I rushed the spanking and did not adequately deal with their hearts in preparation for it but there are also times that we need to move on and not provoke our children toward a hard heart we deal with their sin we administer the spanking we point them to the Savior and we usher them on their way Richard Phillips gives us this summary statement here our goal is that through the way we administer spankings and the attitude and demeanor we display our children will conclude I shouldn't do that again without ever thinking my father is mean and angry spanking properly conducted will enable parents lovingly immediately and firmly to correct disobedience while opening the child's heart to instruction a refusal or failure to displease our children like David leads to unruly hearts and unhappy children alright let's circle back now to where we started this morning working and keeping and how they go hand in hand this is very applicable to our roles as fathers we should not only be disciplining our children but we should also not only just be disciplining our children we must do both and seek to do both well by

God's grace a father who is physically or relationally absent not nurturing his children but then shows up when it's time to discipline will exasperate them that's a failure to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord but so too is a father who neglects to discipline his children when needed that is ignoring God's instruction that is not protecting our children's hearts so we must do both correcting when there is disobedience but also cultivating to encourage that obedience and how often is it dads that the intentional time that we give to our children produces a wonderful fruitful relationship maybe I'll put it this way as I play with my children and then after we play we clean up together there's often a happiness associated with that not that I can always clean up with my children but there is a happiness associated with that as opposed to sending the kids off to play and then demanding now go clean up it's time for dinner that often can be a time when there's less obedience so again not that we're always saying

I'm going to get down and do it with my kids but when I neglect to do that it makes the obedience when I can't be there all the harder so we're setting an example for our children we're modeling godliness for them as we exercise authority over them Richard Phillips says children who are commanded by their fathers are happy and confident especially when the father has proven his love and his commands are guided by the precepts of god's word okay now I know this morning we have exclusively focused our study on our role as fathers of young children this has been for us who have young children children still in the home and that makes sense because this chapter in the masculine mandate was on discipline but in closing and just briefly a word to you who are both fathers of adult children and a word to you who are grandfathers those two go together so first grandfathers it's true that your role is not to discipline your grandchildren but you have a unique opportunity to encourage your grandchildren to obey their parents you can remind your grandchildren of what

God's word says about obeying their parents and you don't have to stop at just what God says about obedience to their parents you can nurture your grandchildren's hearts with all that God says in his word God I have I have this book here written by a local pastor Larry McCall it's called Grandparenting with Grace and our brother pastor Larry says in God's gracious providence the torch of faith that was carried by those who preceded us has now been placed in our hands God wants us to be faithful in passing that torch to the coming generations the Lord is calling on us grandparents to be diligent to be intentional in showing our grandchildren the greatness and grace of our glorious Lord so that they should set their hope in God as Psalm 78 7 says now there's a worthy goal for our grandparenting so if you are a grandfather you're interested in this book and you want to borrow it first come first serve but

[34 : 42] I would encourage you to consider good resources that help to think through how to grandparent intentionally and now finally a word to you fathers who have adult children so once our children are out of the house they're living on their own it is true they are no longer under our authority it's true then that you are no longer disciplining them because they are no longer called to obey you but your children are always called to honor you and while you may not be always disciplining them any longer you should still always be looking to speak wisdom into their lives so without overstepping those proper kinds of boundaries as your children are now adults they're responsible for themselves but there's still a place for investing in your children speaking into their lives with wisdom and grace even saying hard things when necessary the Bible speaks often of rebukes and corrections and it's not just for small children involving their fathers but a

Christian father can rebuke and correct his God honoring son that is still what it means to be brothers in Christ together and I know sometimes that could get a little messy or difficult so we seek to do it in wisdom and with tact but it's entirely possible and needed that we would receive hard words that are yet loving words we can go back to David can't we he had failed to interfere with his son Adonijah he had never at any time and that includes adulthood right said to him why do you behave as you do may that by God's grace never be our legacy with our children so may the Lord give us that grace whether our children are young or old whether our children are in the home or out of the home may he give us grace to seek their good to speak truth even when it's hard for them to hear to pray for them and no matter how old they are to always point them to

Christ as he's! revealed himself in his word let's heavenly father how we do need your help how weak and frail how sinful we still see that we are and how often we are not the fathers that you have called us to be whether our children are young or old father keep us from apathy keep us from growing cold and complacent keep us from letting our children just go their way and never seeking to train or correct or seek to point them to Christ keep us also from this harsh authoritarianism that also we are so susceptible!

Keep us from anger from harsh words from distancing ourselves because we are interested in pleasing ourselves with other things and not investing in our children so help us to love them to love them as we nurture their hearts and help us to love them as we discipline and seek to protect their hearts help us to do all of this by your spirit and we do pray for the salvation of our young children save them grow them in your grace and help us to be fathers who walk alongside them in the Christian life holding their young hands and showing them what a joy it is to know you and to love you and to serve you with all of our hearts so give us that strength give us that help pick us up where we fail and strengthen our resolve to live as fathers who honor you at every stage of our children's lives and we pray this in Christ's name Amen Amen