

SESSION 7: CORRECTING & PUNISHING

- **Welcome and Review Last Week's Homework:** 15 minutes

- Discuss being **“patient and consistent”** in your parenting moving ahead.

- **Session #7 Teaching: Punishment vs. Correction:** 15 minutes

After What comes to your mind when you hear the words “correcting” and “punishing”?

According to Mirriam Webster:

- **Punishing = “to impose a penalty on for a fault, offense, or violation”**
- **Correcting = “to make or set right”**

Our mindset and motivation when guiding our children makes a big difference in how they receive it, and what foundation we building in their hearts. Having a Gospel focus lends to a perspective that helps us lead our children in righting their wrongs.

Ask yourself this question: what is the goal for your children? Do you want to correct or do you want to punish?

Simply seeking to punish doesn't always teach what we hope it will. Correction could include something you might call punishment but it has a different end goal in mind.

Think about this, if we are to have a Gospel mindset, what is the goal of the Gospel? It is to repair relationship and then grow us through sanctification into Christ-likeness. Jesus took our punishment to bring correction to the wrongs! As adults, our sin usually looks different then our children's (though I have seen adults throw a tantrum!), but the heart issues are often the same. Correcting focuses on setting right the heart, rather than punishing for a behavior. But we can only do that for our kids if we are also constantly trying to set our own hearts right, and sharing that journey with them. Talking with your kids about your own struggles, especially when correcting them, gives them hope and shows them humility, creating a relationship where they can see why correction is necessary.

“These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” —Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (NIV)

Of course, all choices have consequences of some kind. Good choices bring benefits... poor choices bring negative consequences. As a parent, it can be tempting to use a quick punishment and move on rather than to allow a natural consequence that might impact the entire day and the rest of the family- but which one is more likely to promote learning, work at the heart level and help you build your relationship with your child?

Consequences that will get to your child's heart are consequences that are logical or practical; not extreme or meaningless; focused on the behavior and not the child; and go below the surface to evaluate the heart issue, the child's needs and abilities, our own triggers and motivation; and focus on repairing wrongs, not shaming or humiliating your child.”

Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” Matt. 19:14 NIV

Small Group Discussion: 15 minutes

- ***How were you disciplined or punished, and how does it effect your correction of your children?***
- ***Do you tend to approach wrong-doing with a punishment or a correction perspective?***
- ***Do you and your spouse have a plan for correcting, are you on the same page?***
- ***Do you find it hard or easy to be open with your children about your own heart issues and behaviors?***
- ***What are some examples of natural consequences that you have used as a tool, or allowed your children to experience?***

For homework, we are going to ask you as couples to talk about the *hot button issue*: **Spanking.**

One of the most debated parenting tools is spanking. As with all elements of parenting, it is critical that you look at your own heart and the Fruit of the Spirit in its application. One of my favorite parenting quotes is “*God instructs parents not to exasperate their children, not the other ways around.*”

- **Small Group Wrap-Up: 10 minutes**

What did you cover in your small group time? What were the biggest take-aways and action items?

- **Discuss This Week’s Homework: 5 minutes**

- ***Make sure you and your spouse are on the same page for your family’s correction/punishment process. Review the following page and discuss.***
- ***Focus on the LIFE Journaling Method and it will give you more insights on how to better coach your children.***

HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER:

1. Is it an effective tool for this child and this situation? If a parenting tool builds a wall between a parent and child rather than opening doors for communication and teaching, its not an effective tool.
2. Are there other consequences that are better tied to the behavior that needs correcting? Natural/practical consequences help the brain of a child utilize the logic part of their brain, making it easier for the lesson and correlation between the issue and the result to take deeper root.
3. Self-control and anger. Many of our kids behaviors trigger responses or frustrations in us that aren't really even about our child. When we our buttons are pushed, its hard to manage our own emotions, making us more susceptible to impulsivity and less able to connect with our child. When we are angry, we are more prone to humiliate or shame our child.
4. The Rod of Discipline: Many people have been taught that the rod of discipline in the Bible is a mandate to spank. But in the Bible, the "rod" was a tool a shepherd used to direct his sheep. If we are going to spank, are we directing?
5. What is your motive? Are you looking for control; a quick change in behavior; or for your children to have a changed heart open to the love of God.
6. Does my child have an unknown history, known trauma or extenuating circumstances, processing or learning delays, or other circumstances that could be impacting their ability to do what I am asking them to do? Make sure you are in tune with your child, you understand their emotional state, motivations, etc.

While spanking gets all the attention as a hot button issue, here are some other ideas to put in your tool belt:

1. Pause fun activities until responsibilities (chores, school, etc...) are met.
2. Consider time out (a good rule of thumb is 1 minute per year old) or a time in (stay close to the parent until able to discuss the issue).
3. Restoration training. If they said an unkind thing, after apologizing, have them tell 3 kind things to that person. If they use their hands to hit, have them use their hands to do something kind to restore.
4. Rewind the conversation. Explain how the words or tone they used were hurtful or not helpful. Then practice the conversation again to model the appropriate behavior. Karyn Purvis has a lot of great little scripts that work with younger kids, like "Try that again with respect please", or "Would you like a re-do?"