



Child
Discipline

BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN A STRONG-WILLED CHILD

CYNTHIA ULRICH TOBIAS

(Proverbs 22:15)



Michael Tobias, you need to pick those toys up and put them in the basket now!" Even as I heard myself issue the order to my four-year-old, I realized I was in trouble. I sometimes forget that I am dealing with a child who is just as strong-willed as I am, and barking out orders has never been an effective means of communicating with me. But I had already climbed out on my limb, and I was not about to come back.

Noting that Mike was making no move to clean up, I moved a little further out on the limb. "Mike, if I have to pick up those toys, I am going to give them to some other kids." He shrugged. "Give them to some other kids," he said. I could not hide my surprise. Some of those toys were among his favorites. But he had just climbed out on his limb, too. Without another word, I scooped up the toys and took them to the garage. Later in the week, I gave the toys to a ministry at our church. Six months later, he had never once asked for any of those toys. He knew that he had called my bluff, and he was fully prepared to accept the consequences.

Anyone with a strong-willed child already realizes that the discipline strategies that work for other kids simply do not have the same effect. From the cradle to the grave, strong-willed children will present challenges to their parents unlike other children. Although people have often been led to believe that strong will denotes defiance, rebellion, and disobedience, that steely determination does not have to be a negative trait! When parents know how to bring out the best in a strong-willed child, they find incredible strength and possibilities without sacrificing any bottom-line accountability.

STRONG-WILLED CHILDREN AND AUTHORITY

Strong-willed children do not have trouble with authority itself—only with how it is communicated. Strong-willed children know they should not get by with bad behavior. When they push, they want their parents to push back. They just don't want the parent to simply issue orders. These children want to be treated with respect and courtesy. Instead of saying, "Get downstairs right now and get in that car!" a parent will get better cooperation with "The car is leaving in two minutes—let's go!" Instead of, "You're not watching television until that homework gets done!" try "Feel free to turn on your favorite show as soon as your homework is done." A friendly, respectful tone does not indicate weakness on a parent's part if the bottom line stays intact.

STRONG-WILLED CHILDREN AND CONTROL

Strong-willed children do not need to control their parents—they just cannot let parents take all the control away from them. These children realize the bottom line early on when it comes to the issue of control. Children always have the choice to obey

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or disobey. If parents use words like, "You will . . ." or "This is how it's going to be . . ." strong-willed children may end up exercising the only control they have left—disobedience—even if the consequences are unpleasant or harmful. Parents can and should enforce the rules, but they need to realize that they cannot force a child to obey them. Inspire, motivate, hold the child accountable, and the parent will find that the child's obedience becomes less and less of a battleground.

STRONG-WILLED CHILDREN AND RELATIONSHIPS

The quality of the relationship between a child and parent determines the effectiveness of discipline strategies. If parents have cultivated a relationship with their strong-willed child, the child will try much harder to cooperate and keep parents happy. On the other hand, if a child senses that the parental relationship is hostile, he or she thinks, "Why bother? They don't like me anyway!" If a child perceives that parents spend the majority of their time yelling, the relationship seems hostile.

Strong-willed children who respect the relationship with their parents do not want to shame or embarrass them. These children must be convinced of the strength of a parent's love in order to be motivated not to disappoint or jeopardize the relationship. When strong-willed children surrender their strong will to Christ, they may do so not because of the threat of eternal punishment, but because of the promise of the wonderful relationship with Jesus Christ.

STRONG-WILLED CHILDREN AND SCRIPTURE

Some parents get a little defensive about seeking the cooperation of their children. After all, the Bible mandates that children should obey their parents, right? The often-quoted "Children, obey your parents"

(Eph. 6:1) is followed by "Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath" (Eph. 6:4). Also, Proverbs 22:6 teaches, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." For "in the way he should go," the Amplified Bible has "according to his individual gifts or bents." This means that parents must consider the ways of God and each child's uniqueness. No two children are the same, and no one method of discipline and correction will work for everyone. Understanding our children's unique gifts and bents helps us to be better parents. What should stay consistent is the love and respect we communicate to each unique creation God entrusts to our care.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of child discipline include:

- Deuteronomy 6:5-9; 8:5
- Proverbs 3:11, 12; 19:18; 22:6, 15; 29:15, 17
- Ephesians 6:1-4

Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on child discipline at Proverbs 22:15 on page 829. See also the personality profile of the wise son on page 802

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child;
The rod of correction will drive it far from him.

- 16 He who oppresses the poor to increase his riches,
And he who gives to the rich, will surely come to poverty.

SAYINGS OF THE WISE

- 17 Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise,
And apply your heart to my knowledge;
18 For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you;

- Let them all be fixed upon your lips,
19 So that your trust may be in the LORD;
I have instructed you today, even you.
20 Have I not written to you excellent things
Of counsels and knowledge,
21 That I may make you know the certainty of the words of truth,
That you may answer words of truth
To those who send to you?
22 Do not rob the poor because he is poor,
Nor oppress the afflicted at the gate;
23 For the LORD will plead their cause,
And plunder the soul of those who plunder them.

KEY PASSAGE



Child Discipline

SPARE AND SPOIL

(22:15)

The Bible emphasizes the importance of parental instruction and correction in raising children. God has given parents the responsibility to train their children in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6). Parents must deal with misbehavior by using corrective discipline. The "rod of correction" has gotten bad press because of the problem of child abuse. Good parents, however, understand the need for the "rod of correction," such as a spanking, but not in anger and never abusive. This "rod," used sparingly for only blatant misbehavior (and not childish irresponsibility), is guaranteed to drive foolishness from the heart of a child. "Do not withhold correction from a child," continued Solomon, for it will "deliver his soul from hell" (Prov. 23:13, 14). Parents show great love for their children when they lovingly and consistently discipline them. When parents train their children in the way they should go, the parents have sown seeds of hope that when their children are old they "will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

To Learn More: Turn to the article about child discipline on pages 830, 831. See also the personality profile of the wise son on page 802.

SOUL NOTE



Ready to Explode (22:24, 25) Anger can be a dangerous emotion if it energizes destructive behavior. This proverb encourages people to "make no friendship with an angry man." People may not be able to avoid the anger expressed by others, but they can avoid close ties with "furious" people. Such people are ready to explode, and those around them will either catch the brunt of that fury or become guilty by association. The advice to stay away from people who cannot control their anger should be taken seriously. People must choose carefully those who will be their closest friends, spouses, and business partners. **Topic: Anger**

But the wealth of the sinner is stored up
for the righteous.

23 Much food *is in* the fallow ground of the
poor,
And for lack of justice there is waste.^a

24 He who spares his rod hates his son,
But he who loves him disciplines him
promptly.

25 The righteous eats to the satisfying of
his soul,
But the stomach of the wicked shall be
in want

14 The wise woman builds her house,
But the foolish pulls it down with her
hands.

2 He who walks in his uprightness fears
the LORD,
But *he who is* perverse in his ways
despises Him.

3 In the mouth of a fool *is* a rod of pride,
But the lips of the wise will preserve
them.

4 Where no oxen *are*, the trough *is*
clean;
But much increase *comes* by the strength
of an ox.

5 A faithful witness does not lie,
But a false witness will utter lies.

6 A scoffer seeks wisdom and does not
find it,
But knowledge *is* easy to him who
understands.

Go from the presence of a foolish man,

When you do not perceive *in him* the
lips of knowledge.

8 The wisdom of the prudent *is* to
understand his way,
But the folly of fools *is* deceit.

9 Fools mock at sin,
But among the upright *there is* favor

10 The heart knows its own bitterness,
And a stranger does not share its joy.

11 The house of the wicked will be
overthrown,
But the tent of the upright will flourish.

12 There is a way *that seems* right to a
man,
But its end *is* the way of death.

13 Even in laughter the heart may sorrow,
And the end of mirth *may be* grief.

14 The backslider in heart will be filled
with his own ways,
But a good man *will be satisfied* from
above.^a

15 The simple believes every word,
But the prudent considers well his steps.

16 A wise *man* fears and departs from evil,
But a fool rages and is self-confident.

17 A quick-tempered *man* acts foolishly,
And a man of wicked intentions is
hated.

18 The simple inherit folly,
But the prudent are crowned with
knowledge.

19 The evil will bow before the good,

13:23 ^aLiterally *what is swept away*

14:14 ^aLiterally *from above himself*

SOUL NOTE



Balancing Act (13:24) When it comes to raising children, Scripture condemns the two extremes of permissiveness and child abuse. Proverbs emphasizes that parental discipline is an expression of love. Discipline and correction are a parent's way of showing love and concern. Undisciplined children often develop insecurity and a poor self-image. Moreover, they don't know how to act properly in many situations. Proper and consistent discipline, done with a balance of love and concern, communicates to a child that he or she is genuinely loved. **Topic: Child Discipline**

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| <p>6 For the LORD gives wisdom;
From His mouth <i>come</i> knowledge and understanding;</p> <p>7 He stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
<i>He is</i> a shield to those who walk uprightly;</p> <p>8 He guards the paths of justice,
And preserves the way of His saints.</p> <p>9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice,
Equity <i>and</i> every good path.</p> <p>10 When wisdom enters your heart,
And knowledge is pleasant to your soul,</p> <p>11 Discretion will preserve you;
Understanding will keep you,</p> <p>12 To deliver you from the way of evil,</p> | <p>From the man who speaks perverse things,</p> <p>13 From those who leave the paths of uprightness
To walk in the ways of darkness;</p> <p>14 Who rejoice in doing evil,
<i>And</i> delight in the perversity of the wicked;</p> <p>15 Whose ways <i>are</i> crooked,
And <i>who are</i> devious in their paths;</p> <p>16 To deliver you from the immoral woman,
From the seductress <i>who</i> flatters with her words,</p> <p>17 Who forsakes the companion of her youth,
And forgets the covenant of her God.</p> <p>18 For her house leads down to death,
And her paths to the dead;</p> |
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PERSONALITY PROFILE



Child Discipline

THE WISE SON

(PROVERBS 2—3)

Christian parents hope to raise their children to be wise—to fear the Lord and serve Him. Wise Christian parents understand that just as God disciplines His children in order to teach them to do right, so parents must discipline their children for the same reason (Prov. 3:12). God has given parents this responsibility, and they must take it seriously.

Children need discipline—indeed, they desire it. They need to know the boundaries and the rules; they need to know that their parents will consistently discipline them should they try to cross those boundaries or break those rules. Parents who commit themselves to teaching their children to be wise will find their children's hearts open like a treasure chest, waiting to be filled. That treasure chest, filled with wisdom learned from listening to and watching their parents, can be drawn from for the rest of their lives. So how can parents teach wisdom?

First, the parents must live wisely by fearing the Lord (Prov. 1:7), trusting Him, seeking His guidance, and following His commands. When children see wisdom lived out in their homes, they will learn what it means to follow God.

Second, parents must encourage their children to build that personal relationship with God: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart" (Prov. 3:5). The Book of Proverbs advises children to learn to discern between wisdom and folly, to not despise the discipline given by parents or by God, and to continue to seek wisdom all the days of their lives.

Children need to know that their parents have placed boundaries around them because of love for them. They learn about God's love and discipline as they experience parental love and discipline. Parents who teach their children wisdom are giving them a lasting gift, for "length of days is in her right hand. . . . Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Prov. 3:16, 17).



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20 Do you see a man hasty in his words?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.

He who pampers his servant from childhood
Will have him as a son in the end.

22 An angry man stirs up strife,
And a furious man abounds in transgression.

23 A man's pride will bring him low,
But the humble in spirit will retain honor.

24 Whoever is a partner with a thief hates his own life;
He swears to tell the truth,^a but reveals nothing.

Every word of God is pure;
He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

PROVERBS 30:5

Every word of God is pure;
He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

25 The fear of man brings a snare,
But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.

6 Do not add to His words,
Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

26 Many seek the ruler's favor,
But justice for man comes from the LORD.

Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die):
Remove falsehood and lies far from me;

27 An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous,
And he who is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.

Give me neither poverty nor riches—
Feed me with the food allotted to me;

9 Lest I be full and deny You,
And say, "Who is the LORD?"
Or lest I be poor and steal,
And profane the name of my God.

THE WISDOM OF AGUR

30 The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, his utterance. This man declared to Ithiel—to Ithiel and Ucal:

29:24 ^aLiterally hears the adjuration

SOUL NOTE



God-given Responsibility (29:15, 17) Discipline teaches wisdom. Children who are lovingly disciplined learn right from wrong. Parents have the God-given responsibility to raise their children with correction and discipline so that those children grow into responsible adults. Proper, loving, and consistent discipline builds character and stability in children. Parents must take their responsibility seriously, preparing their children to become responsible adults who understand the love and discipline of God. **Topic: Child Discipline**

crossed over. ²³And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people crossed over. The king himself also crossed over the Brook Kidron, and all the people crossed over toward the way of the wilderness.

²⁴There was Zadok also, and all the Levites with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God. And they set down the ark of God, and Abiathar went up until all the people had finished crossing over from the city. ²⁵Then the king said to Zadok, "Carry the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back and show me both it and His dwelling place. ²⁶But if He says thus: 'I have no delight in you,' here I am, let Him do to me as seems good to Him." ²⁷The king also said to Zadok the priest, "Are you not a seer? Return to the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz your son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. ²⁸See, I will wait in the plains of the wilderness until word comes from you to inform me." ²⁹Therefore Zadok and Abiathar carried the ark of God back to Jerusalem. And they remained there.

³⁰So David went up by the Ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up; and he had his head covered and went barefoot. And all the people who were with him covered their heads and went up, weeping as they went up. ³¹Then someone told David, saying, "Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom." And David said, "O LORD, I pray, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness!"

³²Now it happened when David had come to the top of the mountain, where he worshiped God—there was Hushai the Archite coming to meet him with his robe torn and dust on his head. ³³David said to him, "If you go on with me, then you will become a burden

to me. ³⁴But if you return to the city, and say to Absalom, 'I will be your servant, O king; as I was your father's servant previously, so I will now also be your servant,' then you may defeat the counsel of Ahithophel for me. ³⁵And do you not have Zadok and Abiathar the priests with you there? Therefore it will be that whatever you hear from the king's house, you shall tell to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. ³⁶Indeed they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz, Zadok's son, and Jonathan, Abiathar's son; and by them you shall send me everything you hear."

³⁷So Hushai, David's friend, went into the city. And Absalom came into Jerusalem.

MEPHIBOSHETH'S SERVANT

16 When David was a little past the top of the mountain, there was Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth, who met him with a couple of saddled donkeys, and on them two hundred loaves of bread, one hundred clusters of raisins, one hundred summer fruits, and a skin of wine. ²And the king said to Ziba, "What do you mean to do with these?"

So Ziba said, "The donkeys are for the king's household to ride on, the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine for those who are faint in the wilderness to drink."

³Then the king said, "And where is your master's son?"

And Ziba said to the king, "Indeed he is staying in Jerusalem, for he said, 'Today the house of Israel will restore the kingdom of my father to me.'"

⁴So the king said to Ziba, "Here, all that belongs to Mephibosheth is yours."

And Ziba said, "I humbly bow before you, that I may find favor in your sight, my lord, O king!"

SOUL NOTE



Do Them a Favor (15:14) David had not dealt decisively with Amnon's rape of Tamar, so Absalom had taken matters into his own hands. David did not deal decisively with Absalom's murder of Amnon, nor with Absalom's treason.

Absalom was used to getting his own way without facing consequences, and had seen the same pattern with the rest of his siblings. Absalom's story pictures an undisciplined child becoming an undisciplined adult. When parents discipline their children, they do so knowing that they are doing their children a favor—saving them from the tragic consequences of an undisciplined life. **Topic: Child Discipline**

SHIMEI CURSES

⁵Now when there was a of Saul, with Gera, coming in continuing stones at David. And men were d ⁷Also Shime ⁸"Come out you rogue! all the bless place you b ⁹livered the your son. S ¹⁰evil, because

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to flight the armies of the aliens. ³⁵Women received their dead raised to life again.

Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. ³⁶Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. ³⁷They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted,^a were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented—³⁸of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

³⁹And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, ⁴⁰God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

THE RACE OF FAITH

12 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run

with endurance the race that is set before us, ⁴¹looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

HEBREWS 12:3

THE DISCIPLINE OF GOD

³For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

⁴You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. ⁵And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons:

*"My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD,
Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him;
⁶For whom the LORD loves He chastens,
And scourges every son whom He receives."*^a

11:37 ^aNU-Text omits *were tempted*.

12:6 ^aProverbs 3:11, 12

SOUL NOTE



Get in the Race (12:1-4) In order to run well, runners must let go of any weights that slow them down and just focus on the finish line. Likewise, believers must set aside any weight of sin in order to "run with endurance" toward the finish line of life. We know we'll finish, because the Savior is "the author and finisher of our faith," and He stands at the finish line to welcome us into eternity. When the hurdles of life are looming ahead of us and when the race seems too difficult, we need to get our eyes fixed on Jesus. **Topic: Faith**

SOUL NOTE



For Our Good (12:5-11) Children don't enjoy discipline. But parents know that tough discipline is sometimes required in order to teach an important lesson. The same is true for God's children. Though they love God, believers are sometimes disobedient—rebellious against His rules. God's discipline proves that He loves His children. Discipline may come in the form of consequences, pain, or trials, but its goal is to mold and shape us. Like a loving Father, God disciplines us because He wants to keep us safe and help us mature. **Topic: Child Discipline**