

Encouraging Parents with Little Ones – *Heb 12:5-11*

Introduction – God continues to bless this congregation with lots of little ones. This sermon does not intend to address childrearing in anything near its entirety, but rather is an attempt to provide “boots on the ground” encouragement to our people in real time.

Our Covenantal Identity (Deut 7:9) – God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply. Childrearing is God’s idea and it is connected to fulfilling the dominion mandate. All Christian childrearing is a response to a much greater promise and is therefore something which is accomplished by grace through faith. It is vain to raise your children without the LORD (Psalm 127:1-3). They are a reward; but they are only a reward or a heritage by faith. Without faith, there is no promise, only lots of late nights. But with faith in the promises of God, all paedo-discipleship begins with hope and trust in God for the outcome. Remember, at the root of it all, covenant-keeping is promise-believing.

Imitating God’s Discipleship Training (Heb 12:5-11) – With the promises in mind, let’s address one aspect of childrearing that is often under attack by the world around us – and that is faithful, loving discipline. When God disciplines us, we are to receive it as evidence of His powerful love (vv5-6). We are to see this through the example of human fathers who (of course) discipline their children; else they would be illegitimate (vv7-8). Of course the discipline of human fathers is imperfect, but the lesson of God’s perfect discipline can be learned: faithful discipline is and must be painful, and it will yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those trained by it (vv9-11).

The sanctifying work of discipline is a grace of God for God’s children, and for the children of promise-believing parents. We are not talking about spanking; we are talking about Spirit-filled spanking. Behaviorists discipline by works; Christians discipline by faith. The difference is the distance between heaven and hell.

Let Wisdom Speak – Proverbs are not simply “the way the world works” but more importantly, “the way the LORD works in the world.” Discipline proves they are your children and loved (Prov 3:11-12). Refusing to spank your children is defined as hatred (13:24). Therefore, chasten your son with the long-view (v19:18). Spanking cleanses the heart and home (v20:30). God is at work in it (v22:6) driving out the foolishness bound up in your child’s heart (v22:15). In light of the promises, the rod is an instrument of gospel-preaching (vv23:13-14).

Qualified Rod-bearers (Gal 6:1) – Neglecting this principle is what gives spanking such a bad name. You are only qualified to correct another if you are spiritual, acting in a spirit of gentleness with honest humility. This is never an opportunity to “get even.”

A Home with Tanks Full (1 Thess 2:7, 11) – Children need affection and lots of it. Discipline brings a brief break of fellowship, but that assumes there is fellowship already in place, and fellowship to return to quickly – otherwise the discipline will not be effective. Your home must be a place filled with grace and kindness so that repentance and restoration is always sought (Rom 2:4).

The Clutch and the Gas – Applying these two principles (filling tanks and administering discipline) is a bit like learning to drive a clutch. Expect it to take some practice and don’t give up just because there was a jolt or two.

The Fruitful Grace of Painful Discipline (Heb 12:11) – Returning to our first text, we can begin to discern what discipline is supposed to look like. A well placed rod (or a flat wooden spatula) brings stinging pain but no injury. Take time to learn the art of spanking and develop a good liturgy that they can expect and follow. It proves you love them (Prov 13:24) and when you include sober instruction, prayer, and full restoration of fellowship, they truly experience this – especially over time. And this will instruct them of their heavenly Father’s love for them in the discipline they are receiving now and will receive with other means later in their lives.

An Instrument of Instruction, not Injury (Psalm 103:13-14, Prov 29:15) – Each situation, each child and each age brings different frames and issues to consider. Never discipline for childishness or physical/social immaturity. Discipline for sin (like whining, complaining, lying, ingratitude, rudeness, envy, temper, cheating, name-calling, pride, resentment, stealing). Name the sin, instruct from the Bible (have a list of Proverbs ready). But also be ready to consider how you may have provoked the situation and correct your own practices (i.e. did you keep them up too late, or were you just whining and complaining?)

Prayer, Forgiveness, Restoration (1 John 1:9, Col 3:13) – Having identified the sin with them, apply the rod, believing the promises. Pray with them, pray for them, and teach them to pray. Empathize with their temptations. Teach them to confess their sins and to receive forgiveness. Assure them of the efficacy of the blood of Christ and thank God with them. Grant forgiveness with a full heart. Hug them, hold them. Talk about restitution issues and help them make plans. Reject self-pity. Invite them back into fellowship and lead the family in welcoming them back.

The Grace of Discipline – A rodless love is no love at all. Neither is a loveless rod. Building a home of biblical discipline requires the sacrificing of your time and the gift of your patience, prayers and presence, your affection and instruction. Believing the promises of God, it is the giving of grace and He will give the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Parent of little ones: do not miss this gracious opportunity.