

Why Parents Use the Rod of Correction

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This is for the parent who already affirms the value and appropriateness of using the rod of correction, and who understands the word “rod” in certain places in the Bible to be a literal paddle of some sort. For parents in this



category, in a typically anti-spanking world, I hope to provide a few answers to the question, “Why do you spank your children?”

In my view there are three reasons:

First, and perhaps foremost, spanking is both *commended* and *commanded* by God.

It is *commended* in places like Proverbs 20:30 where we read, “Stripes that wound [or “blows that hurt”] scour away evil.” Proverbs 22:15 says, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him.” If

it is commendable to help children put away evil and foolishness, then it is commendable to use God’s prescribed means for that purpose.

Spanking is *commanded* in Proverbs 23:13-14. Note the clarity of this directive from the Lord:

Do not hold back discipline from the child,
Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die.
You shall strike him with the rod
And rescue his soul from Sheol.

If your child, or anyone else, seeks an explanation for your decision to spank, you may simply say this: “Everywhere else in Scripture, words like ‘Do not’ and ‘You shall’ are commands from God. When I see these ‘command’ words applied to spanking, I must obey.”

Second, spanking promotes self-control and restrains children from sinning.

Your goal is clear: You want your children to be happy and content because they know where their moral boundaries are, and because they have developed the personal skills needed to stay within those boundaries. The principle for achieving it is simple: Painful consequences for sinning make righteous behavior the preferable option, even for those who are not yet believers.

The child who lies, talks back, refuses to obey, throws an angry tantrum, spits on someone, bites, or acts out in any other sinful way, but who is promptly marched away by a parent to receive a painful spanking, will think twice before stepping out of bounds in that same way again.

Developing self-control in a child requires consistency and perseverance on the part of the parents. Few children learn self-control through one or two spankings. Most require the faithful, consistent application of this training principle, especially in their earlier years. But the pain is well worth the reward. “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:11).

Third, spanking provides a perfect opportunity to preach the gospel to your children.

Throughout the Bible, in one way or another, people are exhorted to “flee from the wrath to come” (Luke 3:7). That wrath is the final pouring out of God’s anger due to sin, and it will mean eternal pain and torment for those who fail to flee. Spanking involves pain. It is not intended to be an outlet for parental frustrations or a way to shame your children. Properly administered, it involves a calm, assertive, loving parent applying a few stinging swats to a child’s backside. Properly administered, it hurts, and for more than just a few seconds. In this way it is a small foretaste of the everlasting pain you hope and pray your child will avoid. Explain this when you use the rod.

If you are consistent in applying the rod, you will also have the opportunity to expose the stubborn sinfulness of your child’s heart. Though your child knows you will spank him, the same sin erupts again, and again, and again. By pointing out this pattern during times of discipline, you can preach another facet of the gospel by helping your child see that what he truly needs is a new nature—a heart that loves to submit, rather than one that loves to rebel. “Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

Lastly, spanking provides the opportunity to speak of the cross. God commands you to deal with your child’s sin in a way that hurts, but He dealt with the sins of His people by crushing His own Son to death (cf. Is. 53:10). Explain how this reveals the depth of God’s hatred of sin, and how, through faith in Christ, all of your child’s sins can be forgiven.

Discipline your son while there is hope,
And do not desire his death. (Prov. 19:18).

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