

The Summer Garden (PART 4)

The Role of Corrective Discipline in Preparing Your Child's Heart to Receive the Gospel

By Daryl Wingerd

In Part 3 I spoke of childishness and foolishness. Now I need to talk about the types of sinful behavior that should never be tolerated in the Christian home—not even once. The only appropriate parental response to the kinds of sins I'm including in Part 4 is disciplinary correction every time—zero tolerance.



Insubordination/Disobedience—This is a child's unwillingness to submit himself to authority by obeying rules, instructions, or commands. Insubordination can be seen where there is outward obedience, but with a poor attitude, or obedience *later*, when the child finally decides to submit. The child who happily "cleans" his room by quickly shoving everything haphazardly under the bed or in the closet, has been insubordinate, not obedient. Obedience occurs when the child complies right away, with a polite and respectful attitude, and does as he was instructed. One might say that true obedience occurs when the child obeys promptly, properly, and politely.

Parents must also teach their children to obey rules and authority figures outside of their own home. Teach them about what I call "circumstantial expectations," meaning expectations and rules that differ from one setting to another. When visiting a home or some other venue where the host's rules are different than those on the child's "home turf," use the opportunity to examine your child's willingness to obey authority figures and rules that are new or different. To effectively demonstrate this principle to your child, enforce the host's rules yourself rather than expecting the host to enforce them.

Petulance/Disrespect—This is the outward display of the attitudes that produce insubordination, often manifested through your child's body language. It reveals a truly ugly aspect of his unregenerate nature. It's the sullen or sour face responding to the parent who says "No," or "Not this time." It's the eye-roll that silently shouts, "Your decisions and rules are ridiculous!" It's the lack of respectful and submissive eye-contact when a parent is addressing the child correctively. It's the child looking away, turning away, or storming away while his parent is still speaking because he's not happy with what he's hearing.

When your child uses words to display his petulance or disrespect, he only exposes what you already know from his body language: he wants to be in control and is bristling with sinful resentment toward your authority. His disrespectful response to your authority is his attempt to control you by manipulating or intimidating you. *Don't be afraid of your children when they act this way!* The child who behaves like this is trying to upend God's appointed order in the family and in the world, and you are on the right side of that order when you refuse to be manipulated by it.

Ungratefulness/Entitlement—This is the child who demands rather than asking, expects rather than hoping for, takes gladly without thankfully acknowledging the giver. I'm not referring to the child who merely *forgets* to say please or thank you, but the one who does not see the *need* to say please and thank you. It is also the child who is jealous or envious of other children's toys and possessions, and selfish with his own. Ungratefulness and entitlement are easily exposed when desired gifts, privileges, or activities are withheld. If you've ever found yourself dreading your child's response when you decide to say no or withhold something he wants, or if you've considered giving him gifts at another child's birthday party to prevent a jealous reaction, then you've already seen the manifestation of this sin.

Ungratefulness and entitlement are two sides of the same coin, and one of the clearest expressions of covetousness (i.e., greed), which is always treated as a serious sin in the Bible. John says it cannot coexist with a love of God (1 John 2:15). Paul says covetousness is idolatry, because of which the wrath of God is coming (Colossians 3:5). It is even included in a list of sins practiced by those who will be excluded from the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Deceitfulness—When your child in any way distorts, obscures, or minimizes the truth for personal gain (usually the avoidance of corrective discipline), he is lying. Lying can be as simple as saying "No, I didn't," when the true answer is "Yes, I did." It is seen in the child who conveniently "can't remember" what happened only minutes earlier. It can even be seen in tones of voice and vocal inflections meant to convey ignorance or innocence. Every unregenerate child (yes, even *your* child) will lie under the right circumstances.

Be firm and decisive when addressing deceitfulness. Where the evidence of dishonesty is clear and compelling, your child's habit of lying will quickly become practiced and polished if you are reluctant to render a verdict and apply corrective discipline. When this happens, your child is in real spiritual peril because *lying is a sin that enables every other kind of sin*. When he learns he can avoid discipline by lying, sins of every kind will thrive in his heart.