

Parenting 201 - Loving Discipline

Ephesians 6:1-4; Hebrews 12:4-11

We are following Paul's teaching in the book of Ephesians and *applying the gospel to our PARENTING*. Last week we learned about Parenting 101:

Parenting 101 - Loving Leadership

1. *Model*

- In your heart
- In your marriage

2. *Lead* - so your children can:

- **See the glory of God** - so they trust Him
- **Experience the love of God** - so they enjoy Him
- **Know the Word of God** - so they obey Him

The first calling of parents is to *love God OURSELVES*. You cannot give away something you do not possess. Don't expect your kids to love, trust and serve Jesus if you don't. We have to model it. We have to **SHOW THEM** what devotion to Jesus looks like. We have to let them hear us pray so they learn to pray. Guys, we have to serve our wives sacrificially so they learn what the love of Jesus looks like. Ladies, you need to submit to your husbands respectfully so your kids learn that AUTHORITY over them is good and necessary.

As we model devotion to Jesus, we also need to LEAD. *Parents are SHEPHERDS*. We guide our families to green pastures and quiet waters where they can see the glory of Jesus. We show them what faith looks like, trusting in God especially through the hard times. We don't just punish their sins, we teach them about forgiveness and repentance and help them experience God's grace so they come to enjoy and delight in God. All the while we keep the Bible open so our kids see THAT is where we find the answers - Scripture is our foundation and our joy - it is how we know God and what it means to serve Him.

Today we move on to Parenting 201:

Parenting 201 - Loving Discipline

3. *Teach* - to form the mind

- Intentional Teaching & Informal Talking

4. **Train** - to shape the will - so your children will:

- Listen to your voice
- Obey all the way, right away, with a happy heart
- Learn to make good choices on their own

Notice that the common theme in Christian parenting is LOVE. We are applying the GOSPEL to our parenting, not applying the LAW. The Law comes into Biblical parenting, but we don't lead with that. We lead with love and everything we do as parents is covered in and founded on love.

Paul was a young Pastor in Scranton, Pennsylvania. (That city means something to some of us.) He planted a church in that depressed and struggling city and helped the church grow through the early stages.

But after a few years he began to get regular feedback about his preaching and leadership and it **felt very critical**. Looking back, he saw there was a lot of love and truth in what people were telling him, but as a 27 year old all-star seminary graduate, he felt like he deserved better and began to dream about other places where he would be more appreciated.

His heart landed on education and **he made plans to move his young family to California** to get out of church ministry and become an all-star principal. He shared the plan with his wife and his elders - all of whom were reluctant but tried to be supportive. They set a date and he announced to the church family that they would be leaving in a couple of weeks time.

The church made a little line and everyone shook hands and gave hugs to express their sadness and appreciation. Paul and his wife locked the doors and turned for their car when they saw **old Bob waiting outside**. Paul didn't want to talk to this oldest member of the church, but Bob asked for a minute so Paul paused to hear him out.

Bob, a retired Railroad man, said:


"I know you're discouraged, but I want you to hear what I'm about to say: we know that you're young and a bit immature." (Paul thought, "Well that's a great start!")

He continued. "Paul, we haven't asked you to leave." Then he dropped this bomb of a question on me: "Where is the church going to get mature pastors if immature pastors leave?"

<https://www.paultripp.com/articles/posts/the-conversation-that-saved-my-ministry>

In that moment, Paul knew that he couldn't leave that church. He felt like the Lord "nailed his shoes to the porch." So he stayed. He humbled himself and the next week shared with the church family that, if they would have him, he would keep growing with them and try to become the pastor they needed.

That was the day his ministry really began. His name is **Paul David Tripp**.



The image shows a YouTube video player interface. The video title is "THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF A TENDER-HEARTED PARENT" in large white letters on a blue background. Below the title, it says "MICAHA 6:6-8" and "MARCH 8, 2020". The video is by "PASTOR PAUL DAVID TRIPP". The video player shows a play button, a progress bar at 39:28, and various control icons. The video content shows a man with a mustache and glasses, wearing a dark cardigan, standing on a stage with his hands outstretched. A heart icon is visible in the top right corner of the video frame.

The Transforming Power of a Tender-Hearted Parent

PAUL DAVID TRIPP 3/8/2020 MICAHA

For some of you that may not be a household name, but Paul Tripp has become one of the foremost voices for gospel-centered ministry, Biblical counseling, Christian parenting and male facial hair. And he traces the birth of all of those ministries and books to **that moment in time** - that single conversation with a retired railroader.

It wasn't the words that impacted him, Paul says. It was the ***TENDERNESS*** behind the words.

<https://summitchurch.com/message/the-transforming-power-of-a-tender-hearted-parent>

Love must underly all we do as parents:

1. **Model** love for God and
2. **Lead** - to shepherd the heart
3. **Teach** - to form the mind
4. **Train** - to shape the will

LOVE is the necessary foundation for all ministry and all parenting. Compassionate, sensitive, patient, enduring LOVE. And until you *experience the Fatherly love of God* that is all of those things and a trillion more, you will not have the resources to raise your kids or to serve your spouse or to bless anyone else around you.

Last week we saw the importance of loving leadership. This week we will focus on loving discipline. **Two parts this week** - first we will touch briefly on the need for TEACHING in the home. Since we covered that a good bit last week we will focus this week on the training and discipline side. But for now see that we must LEAD our children to Jesus so He can change their hearts; we must TEACH them to form their minds and we must TRAIN them to shape their will.

After modeling and leading our children, commitment three of Biblical parenting is to TEACH.

3. Teach - to form the mind

- Intentional Teaching & Informal Talking

“You shall love the Lord with all your heart... You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in the house, and when you walk by the way...” Deut. 6:5-7

This is Moses’ application of the Great Shema, the Great Commandment. First he emphasizes that God’s Law must be UPON OUR HEARTS. Notice that Moses is addressing PARENTS in this foundational passage of the Law. Parents must model wholehearted devotion to the Lord. And *when you love God with all you are, you TALK ABOUT HIM.*

If the Bible is your favorite book, you will share that with your kids. You will share verses that are speaking to you. You will help your kids memorize passages that have encouraged you.

When Kristin's Dad was deployed with his Army unit in Desert Storm, Kristin's Mom led the kids to memorize **Psalm 91** - a passage that remains precious to Kristin to this day. For that 13 year old who was worried about her Dad and worried about their family, think how powerfully comforting these words were:

Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. ²I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." NIV

Teaching in the Christian home involves both **formal instruction** - some kind of intentional plan - and **informal conversation**. God set it up this way from the beginning. The family is not a school, driven entirely by curriculum. The curriculum of the family is called LIFE. But as you get up, as you lie down, as you walk along the way - you are always teaching, always explaining, always showing how God is at work, always pointing to Jesus.

3. Teach - to form the mind

- **Intentional Teaching & Informal Talking**

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4

Ephesians 6:4 shows us that ***God's plan for parents has not changed*** from the Old Testament to the New. God has always expected parents - and particularly **FATHERS** - to lead the way in the home when it comes to the discipline and instruction of their children.

Dads have come to defer to more spiritually active Moms. And all parents have come in recent decades to defer to church programs for the discipleship of their children. But hear this from God's Word - Dads especially but all parents - it is central to your job description to teach your children about God. You cannot delegate that assignment.

It will look a little different in every home, as our Oakwood Gatherings have made clear. But every Christian home should have Bible intake in some form. Every Christian home should have prayer in some form. Every Christian home should have service in some form, outreach in some form. And DAD - it is your job to be sure that it happens. Mom, being respectful and supportive - HELP Dad succeed. **Talk about it**, Mom and Dad. When your kids get older, talk to them about it - what would be most helpful for your spiritual growth? What questions do you have?

Notice the warning - "Don't provoke your children to anger." **Don't EXASPERATE your kids.** The Bible often anticipates the way we will fail. As Dads we can become impatient and unrealistic - swinging from doing NOTHING for a couple of years to suddenly trying to enforce daily Bible readings of like 6 full chapters. We can EXASPERATE our kids instead of leading and teaching them.

I have certainly been guilty of this pendulum swing. The best advice I can give to younger parents is to TALK as a couple and figure out what works best for you two - then begin to drip feed that into your family life. One of the things we have found helpful is **HOLY DAYS** - observing an annual Passover Seder to deepen our kids' understanding of Easter; Christmas traditions.

Whatever it looks like in your house, be sure to include both intentional teaching and informal talking. Both are important to form the minds of our kids - filling them with God's Word and continually directing them to Jesus and the Gospel.

Look at this progression from George Barna's Revolutionary Parenting.



Age 13 - Identity

Age 9 - Worldview

Age 5 - Personality

Child Development Milestones
Revolutionary Parenting, George Barna

By the age of 5 most personality traits are established and visible. By age 9 kids have formed their worldview, including what is true, what is good, what is important and how

you know. And by age 13 their identity is largely in place - they will fine tune it through their teen years but Barna's research stunned him to see that so much happens in the early years. ***If you wait until your child is 13 to start teaching him about Jesus, it may be too late.***

The early years of child development are absolutely vital. There are opportunities at every age and stage, but don't miss out on the early years when kids are so hungry and responsive to Biblical teaching.

Teach to form the mind. The fourth commitment of Christian parenting is:

4. Train - to shape the will - so your children:

- Listen to your voice
- Obey right away and
- Learn to make good choices

We shepherd the heart. We form the mind and we shape the will. Of course God is the One doing this work in all of us. But as parents we have a front row seat to physical, spiritual, mental, social and emotional development. The church can make a difference in the life of a child or teenager. But the impact of even the best ministry is MINISCULE next to the ***influence of parents.***



The Church has roughly **40 hours** with your child each year



Parents have around **10,000 hours** with their children every year

The typical church kid will spend around **40 hours** in Sunday School every year. That same child will have around **10,000 quality waking hours** with Mom and Dad. Of course, Mom and Dad may delegate a large portion of that time to Netflix, YouTube and Fortnite - but the hours are available at least. The influence of your home is 500 times that of church, just in terms of hours.

I like this visual because it shows that even if we make our 40 hours at church as sweet and memorable as possible - we can't compete with what happens at home in terms of establishing values, priorities and worldview formation. Mom and Dad - ***the responsibility to raise the next generation of Jesus followers is squarely on your shoulders.*** The church is here to help - to support you - but it is the responsibility and joy of Christian parents to teach and train your own children.

Here are ***three key outcomes*** to pursue in the training of your children:

4. Train - to shape the will - so your children:

- Listen to your voice
- Obey right away and
- Learn to make good choices

What the Bible expects - therefore what God demands of Christian parents - is PARENT-DIRECTED parenting. Don't let your kids run the show. You have to lead. You have to teach. You have to discipline. Let's look at these outcomes as we explore Hebrews 12. First:

4. Train - to shape the will - so your children:

- Listen to your voice

"We have all had human fathers who disciplined us and *we respected them* for it. How much more should we *submit to the Father* of spirits and live?" Heb. 12:9

Within a loving environment, and always assuring our children of unconditional acceptance - **parents must establish their authority**. As we told our kids from the earliest days: "Your job is to obey. Our job is to teach you to obey."

Notice the progression here: submitting to the authority of our parents is a preparation for submitting to GOD's authority. Kids who never learn to listen and obey Mom and Dad will struggle when it comes to listening to and obeying God.

As young parents, our pastor taught us this as **The German Shepherd Principle**. Now, we have a german shepherd and she does not follow this rule.



Her name is Bella and she is now 14 years old. But the principle is that small kids should learn to ***obey basic commands like a GOOD German Shepherd***: come, stay, sit, stop, wait.

When kids are young - somewhere between age one and age two - they are figuring out their world. And a huge piece of that world is ***WHO IS IN CHARGE***. Authority for a child is not a scary or distressing thing. The lack of authority is. When a loving adult establishes expectations and **CONSISTENTLY** enforces them, children feel safe. What makes kids feel unsafe and insecure is when the rules are constantly changing - when the same infraction is punished severely one time and ignored another.

Parents, hear me. Listen to God's Word here. Your job is to teach your kids to obey.

4. Train - to shape the will - so your children:

- Listen to your voice

“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you...” Eph. 6:2-3

Kids are commanded to OBEY their parents. If you don't give them instructions to obey, they cannot obey - and therefore will miss the blessings promised.

When your kids have grown up and leave the house you will transition into a friendship / coaching role. But when your kids are small it is not your job to be their FRIEND - but to be their PARENT - which is a position of **AUTHORITY**.

James Dobson, in his classic *Dare to Discipline*, made this helpful distinction. If your child is acting FOOLISHLY, instruct them - show them why that way is wrong and why there is a better way. But if your child is acting DEFIANTLY, challenges your authority, **WIN and WIN DECISIVELY**. Authoritative parenting has never been abusive or harsh. But it does involve parents who establish their authority and insist that they are in charge.

Here were some phrases that helped us win those early battles:

- **“Your job is to obey. Our job is to teach you to obey.”** God gave us a job and God gave you a job. We have to do our job and you have to do yours.
- **“Fussers get nothing.”** I like this much better than what I got as a kid - “I'll give you something to cry about.” We chose early on that we would NEVER reward a temper tantrum.
- **“Control what you can control.”** You can't control a temper tantrum, but you can control WHERE it happens. You can walk out of the store. You can go back to the car. You can move the child to his or her room.
- **“Don't negotiate with a terrorist.”** Don't bribe or blackmail. Set expectations and stick to them.

This is the German Shepherd principle. Establish your authority - in a loving way - from the earliest days. Some of you have a strong-willed child. There is a book for that. Listen to Dr. Dobson. Learn from Kevin Leman. Win. Your kids will thank you one day - and so will everyone else. Here is one more quote:

- “Anyone can enjoy their own child. The trick is when *other people* enjoy your child because he has learned to respond to authority.”

Train to shape the will, so your children will listen to your voice. The second application follows:

4. Train - to shape the will - so your children:

- **Obey all the way, right away, with a happy heart**

**“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother.”
Ephesians 6:1-2**

This is not a redundant command. It is getting at both the result - obedience - and the heart behind it - to honor. Do you see how it's the same with parents as it is with God? Does God want us to obey Him? Of course! But does He want us to begrudgingly submit just because we have to or else we will be punished? No! He wants us to obey because we trust Him, because we love Him, because our heart's desire is to honor Him and please Him.

Some of you know the phrase ***“all the way, right away, with a happy heart,”*** from Growing Kids God's Way. We have some Growing Kids instructors among us - it's probably an elective we should offer every couple of years. For now just notice that expecting our children to listen to us and obey us is the right expectation.

Once you have established your authority, this should be the natural outcome: kids obey. ***“Delayed obedience is disobedience.”*** Kids need to learn to obey right away. And they need to learn that surface compliance is not acceptable. To honor mom and dad is not hang your head and drag your feet and take out the trash grumbling all the way. To honor mom and dad is to cheerfully jump up - ideally BEFORE they ask - and take out the trash, all the way to the outside container, rolling that thing to the street on the night before pick-up comes.

When kids are small you need some direct links to establish your authority. With a bird cage or hot stove a quick wack to the hand or swat to the rump is effective. With some direct defiance there is a time and place for spankings - when done with loving restoration as the goal at the end. Spanking should not just be a rote punishment because your kids annoyed you. It should be a clearly defined consequence for a specific behavior you have been working on with your child. They should not be surprised by a spanking. They should immediately know in their hearts it is the appropriate punishment for their crime.

We found the most useful tool in parenting was NATURAL CONSEQUENCES.

4. Train - to shape the will - so your children:

- Obey all the way... Let Natural Consequences Teach

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother.”

Ephesians 6:1-2

- If your toddler doesn't *eat his dinner*, don't give him dessert. When he is hungry later, warm up his dinner - don't let him grab the goldfish and fill up on junk.
- When our boys were small we ended the day by reading *three books together*. If they were delayed in brushing teeth and getting ready for bed it was a natural consequence to say, “You're going to lose a book.” They were very motivated not to lose one of those books.
- When the boys were small we lived on a *very busy street*, so when we were out in the driveway and they were riding their tricycles and big-wheels we had a stop-line that was far away from the main road. And the rule was iron-clad. If you cross the stop-line, you go inside. Your're done riding. It was the appropriate consequence for a big-wheel violation. Disobey the rules of the road, and have your riding privileges suspended.

Clearly expressed rules with consistent consequences create a safe environment for children to grow. They provide FENCES so kids know they are free within those boundaries. Studies have shown that a playground with a fence is both more fun for children and that the space within that park is more utilized because the children there feel safe. They know how far they can safely go.

One more parenting practice to shape the will:

4. Train - to shape the will - so your children:

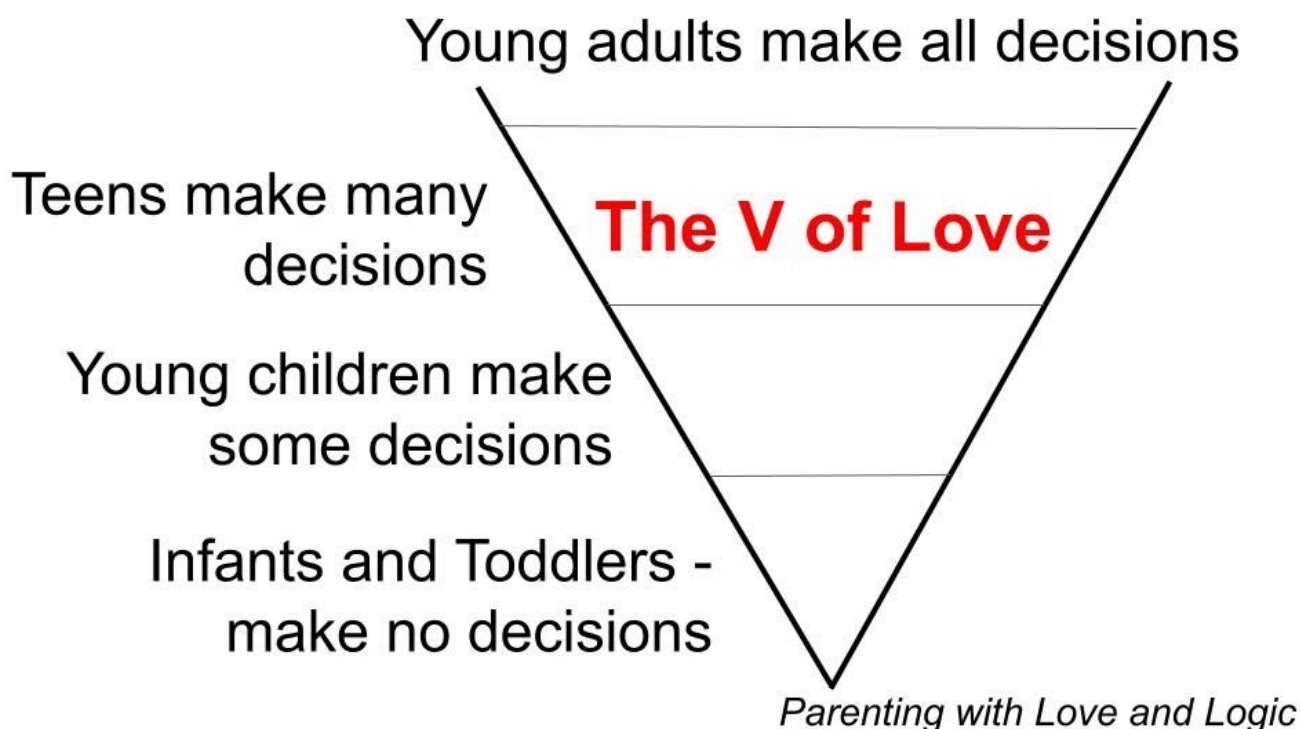
- Learn to make good choices

“God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.” Hebrews 12:10

Our job as parents is not just to have good kids when they are right in front of us. Our job is to raise kids who increasingly learn to make the better choice when they are NOT right in front of us.

Hebrews 12 shows that is ***the goal of all parents*** - who “disciplined us for a little while as they thought best.” And it is **God’s goal as our heavenly Father** - to discipline us for our GOOD, “so that we may share in his holiness.” The point of Hebrews 12 is that the suffering we are called to endure is part of God’s loving plan for us as our Father - to train us to become more like Him - to grow up into His holiness.

We learned this parenting principle as the “***V of Love,***” from Parenting with Love and Logic.

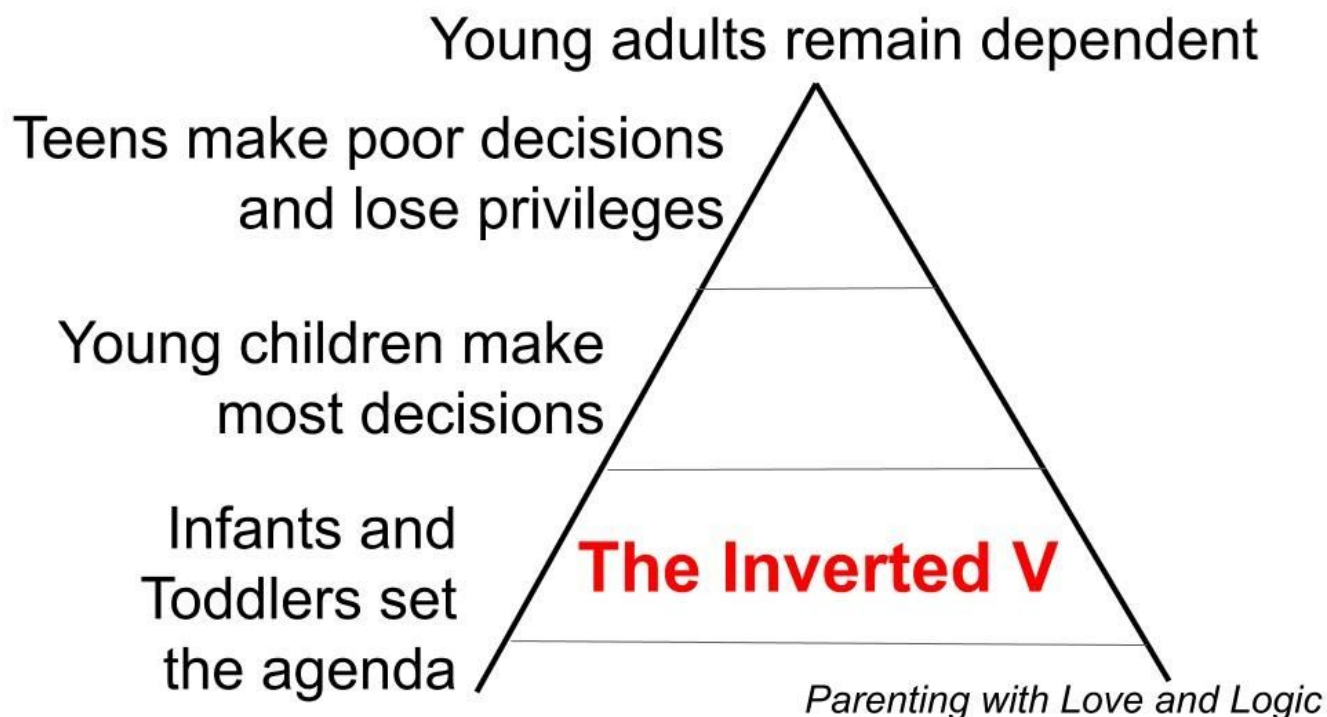


This shows the natural progression. When you have **a baby**, you don’t expect her to decide breast-milk or formula. You don’t schedule a Q&A to see what she prefers. You make the decision and go with it.

- With a 2 or 3 year old you start to introduce choices - do you want to ***eat green beans or peas*** today? It’s not - do you want green beans or Oreos. You only give options you like. But young children can still make some choices.
- Older kids and teenagers start making more choices - do you want to do your homework now or after dinner? Do you want to empty all the trash cans or do the dishes today?

The purpose of parenting is ***to work ourselves out of a job***. By the time our kids reach age 18 or 20 we want them making all of their decisions with wisdom and responsibility. Because once they go off to college and move out on their own, you won't be there to coach them and remind them every step of the way. Our goal is to raise independent, responsible human beings.

However, what often happens is that parents invert the V.



Through the foolishness of **child-directed parenting** toddlers set the agenda and parents let every fuss and whine direct them. Young children are enabled to choose whatever they want to eat, to spend time doing whatever they want to do and even math teachers are told not to correct these precious snowflakes if they give wrong answers.

By the age of just 2, 3 or 4 - if parents have not established authority in the home, ***kids will become tyrants and dictators*** like Dudley Dursley. They will demand more and more and parents will become indentured servants to their kids, trying to appease these fickle little terrorists. And of course, without direction, they will not learn how to make GOOD decisions, and so by their teen years, when the price tag on decisions jumps, parents will realize that the child-directed approach isn't working and will lock down all privileges, constantly grounding their teenagers.

And when teenagers suddenly have their freedoms limited, it does not teach them how to make better choices, it makes them angry and leads them into unhealthy coping mechanisms and rebellion.

Now, there is a **time and place for a good grounding**. If a teenager is playing too many video games and is neglecting their studies, it only makes sense to cut off the game playing until grades improve. If a teen is misusing a phone or tablet, looking at things online they shouldn't, it is appropriate to take that device, and all devices away for a cooling down period - only giving them back when proper security measures are in place and some serious gospel conversations have been had. But generally the trend in our parenting should be guiding our older kids and teens toward more and more freedom as they learn to make better and better decisions. Look at the outcome in Hebrews 12:

4. Train - to shape the will - so your children:

- Learn to make good choices

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace.” Hebrews 12:11

Our goal is to raise our kids to maturity in Christ - to model for them a life of godliness, to teach them about Jesus and shepherd their hearts to the living water of the gospel, to train and discipline them so they learn to be civilized human beings and growing followers of Jesus.

DISCIPLINE - loving, intentional, clear and consistent discipline “produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” This is a two way street. Parents must lead and teach and train. Kids must listen, obey and learn. Kids and teens must allow themselves to “be trained by it,” not fighting against the discipline but accepting it.

And of course this is true for all of us with God. He is training us like a good, loving Father. He has the advantage of perfect knowledge so he knows exactly what is best for us. His discipline - which includes even our most painful experiences in life - will “produce a harvest of righteousness and peace” if we submit to it and allow ourselves to be trained by it.

Kids - your assignment today is to write a thank you note to your mom and dad saying “thank you” for teaching me and training me. Thank them for discipline. It is a gift! Thank

them for loving you enough to not let you run the show. Thank them for leading you to Jesus and helping you believe and apply the gospel.

Parents - your assignment is to think carefully about your parenting. What are you doing well? What do you need to improve? Schedule a phone call or meeting with some parents you respect and ask for their input.

Everyone - if you don't have kids in your home right now, your assignment is to spend some time this week thanking God for being the perfect Father. Thank Him for loving you enough to discipline you, to train you - to not let you set the agenda, but guiding you toward the righteousness of Jesus. Give thanks for the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit to see that harvest of righteousness and peace growing in your life.

Let's pray together.