

Discipline Introduction

Whenever I pick up a book on parenting I always go straight to the chapter on discipline. For me, it is a watershed issue on whether or not a book is worth its weight in pulp.

Some of you reading this now may be doing the same. Since we share this quirk, it is hard for me to complain about you skipping over much of the material that helps provide some balance, but let me say just one thing: parenting is not all about discipline. Discipline can help restore order and peace to your home, but it is not a cure-all. Parenting is more complicated than that. Discipline is important in parenting, but so are love, training, vision, involvement, your example, and a number of other things.

In basketball, making a basket may seem like the most important part of the game, but jumping, dribbling, defense, and passing are equally important. It's the same thing with parenting and discipline. If you want to win with your kids, it is not enough to focus on discipline.

That said, biblical discipline can make a colossal difference in your home. Please try to set aside your established ideas about discipline and take a moment to study the timeless truths of God's Word in this area. People have many fears and preconceived ideas about what constitutes loving and appropriate discipline.

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As you read, try not to jump to conclusions or pass judgment. Read through to the end and give thought to the Scriptures written here. Ask God to give you discernment.

Bonsai Parenting

Do you know what a bonsai tree is? For those of you who don't, a bonsai tree is a miniaturized adult tree. It's not a specific type of tree. It can be a pine, oak, maple, or any number of types of trees, but it is just a fraction of the size of a normal tree. It is grown in a small pot or tray, and it is never allowed to grow any bigger than a foot or two tall. The gardener takes the plant and prunes it whenever it gets too big, and once a year the gardener will even uproot the tree and prune the roots. The result is that, after years and years, the gardener produces a tree that has the appearance of being full grown in that its bark looks aged and it has thick branches, but the tree is only a foot or two tall.

Why would a gardener do such a thing? He does it because he has a vision for how he wants the tree to look. He knows that the tree is not likely to just happen to grow into the specific design that he has pictured in his mind. Without trimming it, it will grow into a large, wild, unrestrained tree that you would never want in your house. With consistent pruning and restraint, the tree is allowed to develop its own shape and character, but within constraints and boundaries. It is restrained from becoming what it would be if left to its own, and it is shaped into a beautiful creation.

This is similar to how it works with children. If you restrain them, discipline them, and stop them from becoming what they would naturally turn into, you end up with a well-trained child, teenager, or young adult who is pleasant and a joy to have in your home. If you don't, you may end up with a kid