

February 8, 2026 (Lesson 10)

RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS TO CHILDREN

1. **Children Are Blessings From God** (Psalms 127:1—128:6)
2. **Discipline and Instruction Commended** (Proverbs 22:6, 15; 29:15; Ephesians 6:4)
3. **Purpose of Divine Correction** (Hebrews 12:5-11)

Central Truth: Christian parents are to nurture their children in the ways of the Lord.

Focus: Conclude that Christian parents are responsible to disciple their children by word and deed.

Evangelism Emphasis: It is imperative for parents to reach their children with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Golden Text: “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

One of the great joys of humanity is being able to bear and bring up children. Their smiles as infants, their laughter as school kids at play, and their achievements as teenagers warm our hearts and brighten our eyes. Watching them grow into adulthood is a remarkable journey often filled with wonder, surprises, and fulfillment. For grandparents, their senior years are often made enjoyable by the presence of offspring extending two or three generations.

Sadly, modern studies have indicated dissatisfaction and unhappiness among some parents who wondered if having children was worth it. In a 2021 CNBC report, sociologist Jennifer Glass reported on the results of one survey: “The happiness bump that parents experience right after the birth of a child tends to dissipate over the course of a year.” In 2017, Dr. Mark Holder wrote an article in *Psychology Today* titled “Does Having Children Make Us Happy?” His conclusion after reviewing various studies was that it depends on where someone lives.

Bringing up children is challenging and frustrating at times, but it’s part of the human experience. In any venture or undertaking, there will be good and bad, peace and turmoil. God ordained the perpetuation of humanity at Creation. The framework of the family was established in the union of Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:28). Consequently, parents have both the privilege and the responsibility of guiding their children to adulthood.

1. CHILDREN ARE BLESSINGS FROM GOD

A. Like Arrows (Psalm 127:1-5)

¹ Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. ² It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. ³ Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. ⁴ As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. ⁵ Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

Psalm 127 is an exhortation believed to have been composed by King Solomon. The use of the word *vain* in the first two verses reflects the sentiments found in Ecclesiastes, which was penned by Solomon. People who pursue lives without God find nothing but emptiness and frustration. Their lives are meaningless and toilsome. However, those who make God their foundation enjoy His protection and favor. Their lives are purposeful and fulfilling.

With regard to the family, the psalm expresses the blessing of having children. Becoming parents was the tangible expression of obedience to God's command to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28). Consequently, the ancients regarded childlessness as a potential sign of divine displeasure. This is why Rachel (Gen. 30:1-3) and Hannah (1 Sam. 1:1-11) desperately wanted children. In Psalm 127:3, Solomon attributes children to the graciousness of God toward a family. Like heirlooms that are treasured and passed down throughout the generations, children signal God's favor on a family. Sons and daughters indicate His presence in the home. They are His reward for the faithfulness and reverence of parents.

The psalmist likened children to "arrows . . . in the hand of a mighty man" (v. 4). In ancient times, arrows were useful for hunting and warfare. Skilled men could use them successfully in whatever the occasion warranted. They could provide food for the family table or defend the home and city against invaders. Arrows were significant and symbolic; they were instruments of purpose and productivity that brought fulfillment.

Like arrows, children indicate purpose, productivity, and fulfillment in life. They are purposeful in that they certify there is a family in the home. Their presence validates the parents are living out their God-ordained purpose. They also indicate the parents are productive, with the potential to extend the family name and lineage into the future. Fulfillment is the result of watching children grow to adulthood and taking on their own responsibilities.

In verse 5, the psalmist declared, “Oh, how blessed are you parents, with your quivers full of children!” (TM). When a verbal or physical confrontation occurred at the typical place of meeting, the city “gate,” a father’s “quiver” of sons would provide him with support against his enemies.

The Future

Children do not make up 100 percent of the population . . . but they do make up 100 percent of the future.—Zig Ziglar

B. Like Olive Plants (Psalm 128:1-6)

¹ Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways. ² For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. ³ Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table. ⁴ Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. ⁵ The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. ⁶ Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

Psalm 128 continues the theme of a life and home that is blessed through the demonstration of a reverential association with God. The man who is so inclined can expect to be productive and to enjoy good welfare. His endeavors will be successful, and his marriage will be healthy and fulfilling. The symbolism of plants is utilized to indicate the quality and quantity of a fruitful family. Worshipers who sang this psalm understood its implications, since they were familiar with the harvest of grapes and olives that were staples in every home.

Olive plants were important to the existence and lifestyle of ancient Israel. From the olive tree they plucked food and created oil for illuminating, anointing, sacrificing, and making medicine. “An extremely slow-growing plant, the olive tree requires years of patient labor to reach full fruitfulness. Being well-suited to grow in the Mediterranean climate, the olive tree played a significant role in the region’s economy. The outer, fleshy part of the oval-shaped fruit is what yields the highly valuable commodity of olive oil. Still today, olive oil is considered good for health” (*gotquestions.org*). Likening children to olive plants denotes great value and potential for the family.

Samuel and Susanna Wesley raised their ten children in eighteenth-century England. As an Anglican Church clergyman, Samuel and Susanna taught their children to reverence God. Two of their sons, John and Charles, left an indelible imprint in the history of the Christian church. John is considered the father of the Methodist Church, and Charles wrote numerous hymns that are still sung today. Charles’ son Samuel Sebastian Wesley became one of England’s greatest composers, continuing the legacy established by his grandparents.

The Wesley family personified the psalmist’s view of purpose, potential, and value. Samuel set an example of spiritual service and ministry that influenced his sons to answer God’s call on their lives. Susanna is credited with encouraging her children’s spiritual development through personal times of interaction and Scriptural instruction. As their offspring matured, they carried on the legacy of faith and service that has blessed succeeding generations and brought distinction to the family name.

Along with Psalm 127, the 128th Psalm was a song of ascents. This means it was one of the fifteen songs sung by Jewish travelers as they journeyed to Jerusalem for one of the annual religious feasts. They would sing, “The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion [Jerusalem]” (v. 5), for the temple there represented God’s presence.

\$ *According to verse 6, how would God bless His righteous followers?*

2. DISCIPLINE AND INSTRUCTION COMMENDED

A. Direct Your Children (Proverbs 22:6, 15)

⁶ Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

¹⁵ Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

All children are expected to have formal instruction in school. However, their first exposure to learning occurs in the home. Prior to the establishment of educational institutions, children learned about life, relationships, work, responsibility, and history from their parents. The conduct and behavior of a child outside the home was typically indicative of the level of instruction provided in the home. The same generally rings true today, even with formal schooling, for the foundations of learning are established in the home and family environment.

In the Book of Proverbs, the responsibility of parental guidance is frequently underscored. Since children are naturally inclined toward sinful, self-willed behavior, parents must correct them to guide them toward wise behavior (22:15).

In verse 6, Solomon pointed to the positive potential of parenting. To “train up a child in the way he should go” is to guide, instruct, encourage, and cultivate the child’s development. Parents are expected to point them in the right direction of faith in God, good morals, responsibility, fairness, and hard work, among other desirable outcomes. It is irresponsible and destructive to allow children to grow up without such guidance and direction. As the roots of an oak tree dig deep into the soil to provide strength and stability for future growth, so the guidance of parents prepares their children for adulthood and maturity.

The foundation of a house remains the same, regardless of the changes, adjustments, and renovations its structure may undergo. It dictates what may be allowable or preventable as the years go by, and as architectural tastes and styles may evolve. In the same way, the foundational values

instilled in our children when they are young will serve to keep them from being overwhelmed by the shifting attitudes, beliefs, and practices of the world around them in later years. It is common for Christian adults to reflect gratefully on the guidance and instruction they received while growing up in godly homes.

The Unlocked Door

In *Chicken Soup for the Mother's Soul*, the authors relate a story originally told by Robert Strand. A rebellious daughter from Glasgow, Scotland, descended into a life of street living and prostitution. Years passed, but in a homeless shelter one day, she saw a photo her mother had left with this note: "I love you still . . . come home." When she arrived back home late that night, her knock pushed the door open. She awakened her mother. After a tearful reunion, her mother said, "From the day you left, that door has never been locked" (*ministry127.com*).

B. Discipline Your Children (Proverbs 29:15; Ephesians 6:4)

Proverbs 29:15 The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

Ephesians 6:4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Guiding our children to adulthood and maturity will often necessitate correction and discipline. They are not robots which can be programmed to function flawlessly; they are free moral agents who often test their ability to choose their own way. Even as babies, unable to intelligently articulate what they want, our children can demonstrate rigid independence of thought and will. While good behavior and manners are expected and encouraged in our children, bad behavior and rudeness must be addressed in loving but firm ways.

In Proverbs 29:15, Solomon declared the necessity of discipline. The "rod and reproof" are not instruments of affliction but are meant to direct children toward better choices and behavior. The *rod* refers to punitive correction, whereas *reproof* describes verbal correction. Both are a necessity in

guiding and directing our children to maturity. We tend to learn through hardship, difficulty, and suffering. To give in to every whim and fancy of our children to keep them happy is to severely stunt their emotional development and jeopardize their future relationships.

Spanking children, or corporal punishment by parents and guardians, is frowned upon in our modern world. Several nations of the world have banned the practice entirely, and most psychologists see it as more destructive to a child than productive. In an article in *Science-Based Medicine*, pediatrician Clay Jones, M.D., wrote, “Spanking doesn’t tend to work very well, and certainly is a less effective form of punishment than time-out strategies or other negative punishments like removal of privileges” (sciencebasedmedicine.org).

This is a clear disagreement with the Biblical advice concerning the rod. While there are laws against child abuse and domestic battery, most countries and many American states allow spanking in the home. Each family has to decide what acceptable forms and limits the disciplining of their children will follow. The Scriptures, however, make a strong case for physical punishment as part of corrective discipline.

In Ephesians 6:4, Paul’s comments are part of a section that deals with relationships within the family. In the latter part of chapter 5, Paul instructed the proper behavior of husbands and wives to each other. In the opening verses of chapter 6, he urged children to obey their parents. In verse 4, he advised all fathers concerning their relationship with their children. It should not be characterized by frustration and strife, but by encouragement and godly correction.

The atmosphere in the home should be one of peace, harmony, and love. The existence of those qualities will not happen without deliberate action and maintenance. As children grow to maturity, they experience a myriad of mental, emotional, and spiritual changes. The oversight of parents is necessary to produce well-balanced youth who become well-adjusted adults. Paul advised the use of

discipline and correction in the process. The Greek word translated as *nurture* implies “chastening,” while *admonition* implies “calling attention to” or “warning” children (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance*).

Dr. Benjamin Spock (1903-1998) was an influential pediatrician whose writings encouraged millions of American parents to raise their children in a manner that was criticized as too permissive. He stressed that listening to children and appreciating their individuality was more beneficial than the strict manner of child-rearing recommended by pediatricians of his day. In his later years, Spock apparently had a change of mind concerning his views. He is reported to have said, “We have reared a generation of brats. Parents aren’t firm enough with their children for fear of losing their love or incurring their resentment. This is a cruel deprivation that we professionals have imposed on mothers and fathers. Of course, we did it with the best of intentions. We didn’t realize until it was too late how our know-it-all attitude was undermining the self-assurance of parents” (*Baptist Press*, Nov. 6, 2007).

§ *How can parents bring up children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” without “provok[ing them] to anger” (Eph. 6:4 ESV)?*

3. PURPOSE OF DIVINE CORRECTION

A. Evidence of God’s Love (Hebrews 12:5-8)

⁵ And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: ⁶ For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. ⁷ If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? ⁸ But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

In Hebrews 12 the writer encourages believers to faithfully follow the path of righteousness (v. 1). He points to Jesus as our model of fortitude and determination, even in the face of challenges (v. 2). As God the Father allowed His Son to suffer, we too may face challenges that appear to be

divine chastening. Rather than resist out of rebellion or faint in exasperation when under affliction, we should consider divine correction as a sign of sonship (vv. 5-6).

God's love for His children is not just revealed in His loving care, but also in His firm chastisement. Though we delight in the pleasant expectations and experiences of God's love, we must realize the fullness of His love allows for rebuke and correction in our process of spiritual maturity (v. 7). As discipline is necessary for the development of natural children, chastisement is part of the growth of spiritual children. Where there is no correction, there is no true love and no evidence of sonship (v. 8).

The writer of Hebrews based his instruction on principles already established in the Old Testament writings. In Deuteronomy 8:5, Moses exhorted Israel, "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." Hebrews 12:6 is a quote from Proverbs 3:12: "For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." He may also have had Psalm 119:71 in mind: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes."

Divine Discipline

The goal of divine discipline is not to drive us away from God but to draw us to Him, so we may see Him for who He is.—Timothy Paul Jones

B. Harvest of Righteousness and Peace (Hebrews 12:9-11)

⁹ Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰ For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. ¹¹ Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

The loving correction of parents elicits the obedience and respect of their children. Boys and girls learn to honor their parents' expectations and mind their manners as they are instructed. The tendency to display rudeness and immaturity usually diminishes through loving but firm discipline. Over time, they become well-behaved and responsible youth. In the same way, we as Christians should submit to God's discipline in reverential fear (v. 9). God's intention in correcting us is to elicit holy character and conduct that confirms our position as His children.

Being corrected by authorities is not pleasant for children. No child looks forward to being punished, rebuked, or chastised. Regardless of a child's dislike for punishment, it is a necessary part of their growth. The unpleasantness of discipline is conducive to a child's learning and development.

God's chastisement of His children is designed to produce the "fruit of righteousness" in us (v. 11). Though painful and uncomfortable, divine correction is intended for our benefit. It's similar to athletic training, which involves discipline and rigor that often causes pain and soreness in the muscles. Yet, such training strengthens the body and refines the skills needed to excel in competition. Jesus taught His disciples about painful but purposeful pruning: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:1-2).

The earthly discipline of our children should be modeled after God's design for His children. Our intention should be to curb their negative tendencies and cultivate positive qualities that indicate good character. Though our best efforts will be imperfect due to our limitations, we should prayerfully strive to produce mature and responsible adults. We should also take confidence in knowing our heavenly Father will perfect us as we follow Him in faith and obedience.

§ *What must we learn from our heavenly Father about how we should (and should not) discipline our children?*

‘TRAIN UP A CHILD’

In Proverbs 22:6, we read of God’s encouraging word to parents who raise their children on the firm foundation of His Word. In the Hebrew, the phrase “in the way he should go” speaks of progressive child-training. In other words, parents are encouraged to train their children according to their developmental growth and age-level understanding. A person’s formative years of wholesome Christian nurturing will have a major influence on his or her decisions and actions all through life. They will never be able to fully escape their spiritual training. Thus, many prodigal adults eventually come back to Christ.

Daily Devotions

- M. Directed to Teach God’s Word (Deuteronomy 6:20-25)
- T. Godly Paternal Example (2 Chronicles 26:1-4)
- W. Godly Maternal Influence (Proverbs 31:25-31)
- T. A Mother’s Intercession (Mark 7:24-30)
- F. A Father’s Forgiveness (Luke 15:17-24)
- S. Our Heavenly Father’s Love (1 John 3:1-3)