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PRESENTATION:

"Principles for Peaceful & Joy-filled Parenting"

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Rebound Your Highest Conference



Rebound Your Highest Conference

Principles for Peaceful & Joy-filled Parenting

By **Kathy Collard Miller**

Truths from Hebrews 12:6-11

- Disciplining shows family belonging
- Disciplining reveals love
- Disciplining results in respect of parent and child
- Disciplining is for the child's good
- Child won't understand the value of the discipline and it's not our job to convince them nor force their approval

Practical Principles

1. Willful disobedience versus childish irresponsibility.

2. Power struggle

H. Norman Wright defines the power struggle as "a child challenging parents' authority by refusing to comply with a command or rule."

Bruce Narramore defines it as "Whenever a child makes us lose our temper, he has won a victory."

Three ways we can know we're in a power struggle: our attitude, tone of voice, child's reactions over time.

3. Consistency: "Predictability of a parent's behavior"

4. Communication.

- Ask for feedback
- Have eye contact
- Give no more than twelve words at a time
- Give one command at a time
- Be specific
- Give more positive responses than negative responses
- Make distinctions between commands and requests

5. Natural and Logical Consequences

1. Natural consequences are the safe consequences we allow when life teaches them without us being involved.

2. Logical consequences are the consequences we are involved in.

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[When Counting to Ten Isn't Enough](#)

By Kathy Collard Miller

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SOME VALUABLE DIFFERENCES

“Please don't do that.”

“You're doing it again!”

“I've told you before not to do that!”

“How many times do I have to tell you—*Don't do that!*”

I often went through that downward spiral of anger and exasperation. It usually ended in an angry outburst at Darcy. I wanted her to be an obedient, disciplined child, yet I soon realized that first I needed to be disciplined. That wasn't easy! As a result, disciplining Darcy became an inconsistent, angry merry-go-round.

Many Christians believe that disciplining children means spanking them for every misdeed. But effective discipline involves training our children and controlling ourselves while we do it.

That's why this section follows our examination of self-image, anger and stress. Once we begin to have victory in those areas, we can control ourselves as we guide our children.

Darcy took her first steps as a toddler before I took that initial step of self-discipline. I tried to control her with angry looks and harsh words. I thought that being upset with her would cause her to behave properly. I reasoned, *She won't want me to be angry with her, therefore, she'll do what I want her to do.* When she continued to disobey, I concluded, *I guess I'll have to become even more angry so she won't do that again!*

But, of course, it didn't work, because anger doesn't motivate anyone to obey! It may make them fearful, and they may act correctly for a short while, but in the long run, *anger does not instill obedience!*

I can see now that if I had disciplined Darcy correctly, I could have alleviated much of the anger and abuse I heaped upon her.

THREE LEVELS OF DISCIPLINE

The foundation for disciplining correctly is an understanding of what discipline really is. Rather than being simply punishment, discipline actually has three levels:

1. Instruction: giving guidelines and verbally telling the child how to do something correctly.
2. Training: guiding him, working with him, being along side as he learns.
3. Correction: appropriate measures taken when he disobeys, after he understands and can perform.

We have a beautiful example in Jesus as He taught and disciplined His followers. He spent much time and effort instructing, training and correcting them. They became His disciples—disciplined ones. Then, when He was gone, they could follow His teachings through the empowering of the Holy Spirit.

Will our children continue to obey our teachings even when we aren't with them? They probably will if we have instructed, trained and corrected them adequately. In a sense, they become our disciples.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PUNISHMENT AND DISCIPLINE

In learning about the three levels of discipline, I began to understand the difference between discipline and punishment, and that discovery helped me stay in control.

Punishment implies hurting someone in retribution or paying them back for an offense. We punish to satisfy anger or the requirements of our society's legal system. It is done for our sake, not for the sake of the wrongdoer.

Discipline, on the other hand, is for the sake of the child; to help him improve himself or to learn a lesson that will make him a better person. It's the idea of developing within our child self-control and respect for authority.

Once I realized this distinction, I knew I had been punishing Darcy instead of disciplining her. I was trying to pay her back for her misdeeds, which I took personally, instead of wanting to train her for the future.

When I changed my purpose from punishing to training, I found I more often could discipline her without losing control. Before, it seemed that my anger had to be part of the punishment to emphasize the "badness" of her past actions. I would say something like, "I am spanking you because you did something wrong."

When I changed my focus, I began to want her to remember to obey next time. Therefore, as I spoke to her during the disciplining process, I would say, “I am disciplining you so that you will remember not to do that again.” The correction became geared to the future instead of to the past. That gave me hope, because I knew it would make her obedient, in the long run.

DISCIPLINING IS A PROCESS

In the long run!

As I spanked Darcy, I often thought, *If only I could spank you long enough and hard enough, then you'd be perfect I and you wouldn't give me any more problems!*

My perfectionist expectations were surfacing. I wanted Darcy to be perfect, even though I couldn't be. I wanted to believe that correcting her one time would permanently affect her. Then I became frustrated when she did the same thing over and over again.

Somehow God finally made me realize that disciplining is a long-range process. It takes effort and concentration over a long period. In fact, my correcting Darcy would cause her to try it again, to test me to see if I would be consistent and if I really meant what I said. This is why we shouldn't give up, thinking, “See? Disciplining doesn't work!” If we persevere, we will see results eventually.

CONSISTENCY

When we consistently show them the results of their actions, we will see our children's behavior improve. Yet it is difficult to be consistent.

Consistency is defined as “conformity with previous practice; agreement with what has already been done.” The opposite is disciplining for a misbehavior on some occasions and ignoring the same wrongdoing other times.

Consistency also is defined as “the predictability of a parent's behavior.” It is important because it satisfies the child's need for safety; he knows how his parent will act and he feels safe and secure. When we're inconsistent, he continues to misbehave to fly to make us correct him and cause him to feel secure.

Most of us want to be consistent—why is it so difficult? For one thing, we're either lazy, too busy, or too engrossed in what we're doing to set it aside to correct a misbehaving child. It's difficult to inconvenience ourselves temporarily. But if we will decide to do it, in obedience to God's command, life will be more peaceful. It will result in our child learning to behave properly and to obey.

Another stumbling block to consistency is that we avoid confronting the child because we anticipate conflict. This was my underlying reason for rationalizing, *I've only given Darcy one warning about that today, so I'll let it slide this time.* Or, *Well, she didn't really do anything bad enough to deserve a spanking.* But that kind of thinking only created more battles.

We also may rationalize that we need to be patient. Did you know it is possible to be *too patient*? We can be so longsuffering that we put off correction, thinking our patience will give our children time to learn. In reality, only our involvement will cause them to make the right choices. In the meantime, all their small incidents of disobedience can build up anger within us, and eventually we could explode. Therefore, we should use our patience to discipline *calmly and immediately*, not to keep waiting for obedience, which will never come on its own.

We need to give the same consequence every time, directly after the child disobeys. It doesn't matter how long ago we gave the rule, or even how often they already have obeyed it. Each and every time they break the rule or disobey the command, they must receive the same, fair correction. Then we will see results, and our love will not turn into anger.

Joyce realized the value of consistent disciplining as she saw her son become more obedient. She says, "Jason now knows that when I count 'one ... two . . . ' he'd better stop what he's doing wrong or start doing what he's supposed to. If I reach three, I'm committed to move my body calmly, but with determination, in his direction. Sometimes, it's difficult to drop what I'm doing, but I already am seeing the result in Jason's improved behavior."

THE BENEFITS OF DISCIPLINING

As our children learn to obey, they will realize that being disciplined has many benefits. We also need to recognize those advantages, so that we'll be motivated to train our children.

The most important benefit is that our children will learn self-control and respect for authority. With those attitudes, we can expect well-mannered, pleasant children who will not grieve us in later years.

Another aspect that we sometimes forget is that discipline shows our child that we love him. The child who is trained believes he's important; that he belongs to the family. He knows we love him, because we take the time and effort to teach him.

God commands us to discipline our children, and He promises benefits. "Teach a child to choose the right path, and when he is older he will remain upon it" (Proverbs 22:6, LB). "Discipline your son and he will give you happiness and peace of mind" (Proverbs 29:17, LB). Hebrews 12:5-11 gives many other benefits: an abundant life (verse 9), holiness (verse 10), peaceful fruit of righteousness (verse 11).

WILLFUL DISOBEDIENCE VS. CHILDISH IRRESPONSIBILITY

One important thing that we should know about is what Dr. James Dobson often calls the difference between willful disobedience and childish irresponsibility. Willful disobedience is when the child intentionally disobeys, knowing he's doing something wrong. Childish irresponsibility is when the child does something wrong, but it is because of his immaturity. It is a mistake or an accident.

Quite often children do the wrong thing because they are children! They are in the process of learning and are not yet consistent in their behavior. The difference between defiant behavior and immaturity lies in the child's intention. For example, throwing food would be willful, whereas spilling a glass of milk most likely is irresponsibility. Did he intend to do wrong or was it an accident?

Either way, we may still need to discipline him to teach him responsibility, but the consequences will be different in each case. When he spills the milk, he should wipe it up himself. For throwing food, he could be sent to his room for a few minutes, or we might take away his meal. No matter what the situation, it is important to stay calm and discipline him consistently. We also should remember he'll naturally outgrow childish irresponsibility; we have to help him overcome willful disobedience.

POWER STRUGGLE

When a child acts in willful disobedience, the conflict with the parent may turn into a "power struggle," unless the parent prevents it. H. Norman Wright defines a power struggle in his book, *Answer to Discipline*, as "a child challenging the parents' authority by refusing to comply with a command or rule" (page 46). It's when we say, "Tommy, go clean up your room" and he replies, "No, I won't." Tommy is saying, "I want to be in control."

Dr. Bruce Narramore says in *Help! I'm A Parent!*, "Even though we force the right behavior from the child, he has manipulated our feelings to the point of anger, fear, or frustration. To a child, this is victory. Whenever a child makes us lose our temper, he has won a victory." (page 29)

Dr. Narramore also gives us three ways in *Help! I'm A Parent!* to determine if we are in a power struggle:

1. Our attitude: Whenever we feel angry or frustrated, we are in a power struggle, no matter what we do!
2. Tone of voice: Although we convince ourselves of pure motives and calm attitude, our voice gives us away.
3. Our child's reactions: When a child is stubborn or negative over a period of time, we are involved in a struggle for power. (page 30-31)

We can stay out of the power struggle by realizing we don't need to prove our authority, we only need to exercise it. We do that by disciplining correctly, and thus not becoming upset or angry. The problem is that when a child asks, "Who's in power here?" we get frightened. We're not sure. Our insecurity then causes us to take up our child's challenge and try to prove we are in power through anger.

We don't need to prove it, because it is a fact based on God's provision, regardless of what our child thinks. Ephesians 6:1, 2a says, "Children, obey your parents; this is the right thing to do because God has placed them in authority over you. Honor your father and mother." (LB).

We can be secure, knowing that God has given us authority as parents. Our child cannot take that away from us. We may think he has sometimes, but in principle, it is always ours. Therefore, we don't need to feel threatened. We can exercise our authority confidently and calmly. In the next two chapters, we will learn how to do that as we examine six different methods of discipline.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Make sure you instruct and train your child before you correct him.
2. Think back over several of your child's acts of misbehavior and identify them as willful disobedience or childish responsibility. Determine how you will respond the next time he or she has an accident or disobeys.
3. Read Hebrews 12:5-11. What do each of the following verses teach you about discipline (whether God disciplining us or we disciplining our children)?

Verse 5:

Verse 6:

Verse 7:

Verse 8:

Verse 9:

Verse 10:

Verse 11:

4. What are two further results of discipline that Proverbs 29:17 give?
5. Do you consider Proverbs 22:6 a guarantee or a possibility?

DISCIPLINE STARTS WITH COMMUNICATION

Jody writes, “I can’t control my kids, especially my seven-year-old. I have to get after him all the time. He doesn’t listen to me. Every morning before school, he starts to play and I have to talk to him three or four times. Then I threaten him, but he doesn’t care. I get so mad because I have to talk to him over and over again.”

Jody has a communication problem. She’s talking, but her son isn’t listening. Because he’s not listening, he’s not obeying.

Obedience always starts with communication; it is foundational for effective discipline. Jody needs to learn not only to communicate but also to back up her talk with action.

In considering communication, we must think about the words we use. Do you remember the example I used in the section on stress about a father and his small daughter who were walking through the woods? The father said “Stay on the path,” but the little girl didn’t know what a path was; how could she stay on it? That story clearly demonstrates how we assume our children understand us, when actually, they may not. Sometimes we even assume they can read our minds.

Here are some ways to make sure that our communication reaches our children:

First, *stand close to them while giving instructions*. It’s hard to communicate when we’re yelling from the other room. Instead, we need to have eye contact. We also should have them repeat the instruction back to us so we know they hear us.

Second, *don’t say more than twelve words at a time in giving instructions*. I have a bad habit of giving Darcy, all at once, a list of things to do. “First, go clean your room, then come set the table, and don’t forget to do your homework before you go to bed.” How silly! By the time I get to the last command, she’s forgotten the first one. So I’m learning to give her one duty at a time. After the first one is completed, I give the next direction. I also praise her when a task is completed.

Third, *be specific in our commands and rules*. H. Norman Wright explains in *Answer to Discipline* that a specific rule lets the other person know exactly what you mean and lets him know instantly when he has broken it. (page 39)

We can be specific by breaking the command down into steps. For instance, we could say, “Picking up toys means taking this block and putting it with the other blocks. Now take this car and put it in your toy box,” etc.

If you want to know how you’re doing on these three objectives, tape record your interaction with your family. You may be surprised to find out how many words you actually say and whether or not you are specific.

TRAINING IN MISBEHAVIOR?

As you listen to the tape, count the number of positive responses and negative responses you give your child. Cultivate the habit of giving more positive input than negative.

I must confess I often find myself so busy that I pay attention to my children only when they misbehave. Then I must stop in my tracks and remind myself to give them some positive attention.

Our children learn to use their strong negative behavior to get the attention they *need* when we ignore their more subtle, quiet, good behavior and fail to give them the attention they *deserve*. In a sense, we train them to misbehave when we pay attention only to their wrongdoing. Instead, we should be more aware of our interactions with them and determine to give them more positive than negative responses.

Heather's psychologist instructed her to make a point of sincerely praising her children every five or ten minutes. She believes it strengthened her children's desire for good behavior. She found out how much they wanted to please her and gain her approval.

COMMAND OR REQUEST?

As we look at communicating with our children, we also need to distinguish between giving a command and making a request. A command is a directive that must be obeyed. A request gives a child a choice whether or not to do something.

If I want Darcy to obey me, I should not say, "Are you ready to clean your room?" or "Would you clean your room, please?" When she answers, "No," I think she is disobeying me. In reality she isn't; she is answering my question truthfully. I meant it to be a command, but it was a request. When we give a command, we still can say "please" and talk courteously. We can say, "Please clean your room now."

By stating our desires in a command, using a courteous tone of voice, we will make our child feel secure. He'll know he doesn't have a choice and should obey our command.

We have considered some important points about communication, the foundation for effective discipline. The next section will give us five more methods.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. For three days, keep a list of every positive and negative response you give your child. Then begin to concentrate on praising your child more than you criticize him.
2. If you want your child to do something, without giving him a choice, state it as a command instead of a request.
3. From these verses in Proverbs, write down how you could apply the principle to communicating with your child:

10:19:

12:18:

15:23:

18:2:

18:13

4. From these further verses in Proverbs, describe the way your words should be:

12:25:

15:1:

15:4:

16:21:

16:24:

27:14:

31:26:

METHODS OF DISCIPLINE

Several methods of discipline are available for our children's various stages of development. First, we'll cover spanking since it is used with young children, and then we'll see some other avenues we can use.

SPANKING

First of all, please understand I know spanking is controversial. I never try to convince anyone to use spanking if they don't feel comfortable or can't control themselves. I believe spanking can be an effective possibility for disciplining our children when done in the right way: with patience and control.

I personally overcame spanking in anger and when I used it rightly, it was effective. Let me give you first an example of the wrong kind of spanking.

Julie rounded the corner of her living room and stopped short. Two-year-old Danny was sitting on the carpet beside a philodendron and its empty pot, sifting its soil and bits of roots through his fingers.

“Danny!” shouted Julie. “How many times have I told you not to play in the soil!” She reached him in two steps, jerked him up by his arm and began hitting his bottom and upper legs with her hand. It wasn’t until all her angry tension was unleashed that she dropped the sobbing boy onto the floor.

This kind of spanking is not effective discipline. It is not wise to spank when we’re angry or under a lot of stress. We might not think we’ll lose control, but spanking easily can become a release for our hidden frustration.

The best procedure I’ve found for being in control while spanking is this seven step process, which Betty Chase developed in her book, *Discipline Them, Love Them*:

1. Get alone with the child; do not publicly embarrass him.
2. Ask, “What is our rule?” or “What did Daddy (or Mommy) say?” Make sure the child understood your instruction before you correct him.
3. Ask, “What did you do?” You are asking him to establish personal responsibility for his actions and to confess. This is important.
4. Explain that you love him, and equate love with correction. Say, “I love you and want to help you learn how to do the right thing next time.”
5. Spank the child. Give him a few swift, but painful swats on the buttocks. The child’s angry, mad cry should change to a softer, giving-in cry.
6. Comfort the child immediately after spanking him. Do not reject the child; hold him close and reassure him of your love. Only the parent who spanks should do the comforting.
7. If possible, have the child make restitution. (page 26)

Following these steps will diminish the temptation to strike out in anger.

Spanking is most appropriate with a small child. As the child grows, other methods, such as the ones we’ll discuss shortly, could be used. When we spank, we need to decide whether to use our hands or an object to spank with. I found that the few extra minutes it took to get the wooden spoon from the kitchen gave me an opportunity to compose myself. By the time I returned to Darcy with the spoon, I had decided how I would talk to her. I could then spank her in love and instruction. Sometimes, before getting back to Darcy, I broke the spoon in half with the frustration that I otherwise would have unleashed on her. Breaking the spoon vented the anger that wanted to hurt Darcy, and dropping the pieces into the trash can was a distractor for me. Some people believe that using your hand is a good way to make sure you don’t inflict injury. After all, if your hand starts to hurt, you know you’ve gone too far.

Whatever you decide is best for you, it is important to use it consistently. And spank only when you're in control. Use the distractors we talked about in the anger section, or walk away. Then come back to the child and calmly go through the seven steps for spanking.

I also suggest that you have a "spanking place." By only spanking in one area of your home, you have a few extra minutes to compose yourself as you get there.

Of course, it's always difficult to know what to do when you're out in public. Try to find a private place like a bathroom or even stop what you're doing and go home to give the spanking. If you consistently do that, it will make a great impact on your child which will cause him to be more obedient when he's out in public. He knows you'll follow through on your warning.

Now let's rewrite the scene between Julie and Danny. When Julie sees Danny on the floor with the soil, she could take a deep breath to slow down her natural reaction of anger. Or she could turn quickly and walk away, muttering to herself, "O.K., now, he's done that three times this week, but I've got to control myself. Consistent disciplining—not anger—is going to change him." She might even run in place for a minute to release her anger.

Then she would come back, go to the kitchen to get the paddle or wooden spoon, and when she finally reached Danny, she would be in control of herself. (She should not go to him until she is). She sits down on the couch and places him in her lap. He may see the spoon and cry, "No, Mommy, no spanking. I no do it again."

Julie says, "Yes, Danny, that's right. I'm going to help you remember not to play with the dirt. What did Mommy say about playing in the dirt?"

Danny looks at her, with tears brimming in his eyes, and replies, "No play in dirt."

"That's right, honey, and what did you do?"

Danny looks away and won't say anything, so Julie pulls his face back to hers and repeats, "What did you do wrong?"

"I play in dirt," he whispers as tears roll down his cheeks.

"Yes, you disobeyed, didn't you? What happens when you don't obey?"

Now tears are cascading down Danny's cheeks. "I no want spanking."

"I know you don't, Danny, but I have to spank you so you'll remember to obey next time. I love you, honey, and I want you to obey me and Jesus."

Julie lays Danny over her lap and gives him several swats. He cries loud at first, but then calms down. She picks Danny up and puts her arms around him for several minutes. Then Julie says, "I forgive you, Danny. Let's pick up the dirt now."

EXTINCTION AND REINFORCEMENT

Besides spanking, extinction and reinforcement are two other methods of discipline we can choose from.

Extinction is ignoring negative behavior. When the child sees that the negative behavior doesn't get him what he wants, he stops his behavior.

Reinforcement is rewarding desirable behavior. The rewards can be: social or nonsocial. Social reinforcers include hugging, talking, praising and listening. Nonsocial reinforcers are objects, such as candy, money and toys.

Sometimes, without realizing it, we reward misbehavior. Dr. Bruce Narramore explains in *Help! I'm a Parent!*, "Take spanking, for example. We look at spankings as a form of punishment. We wonder why some children egg us into spanking them. It doesn't make sense from our perspective. But from the viewpoint of rewards, the mystery is solved. Even though spanking is unpleasant, some children are willing to endure pain to receive the reward of parental attention. We think spankings weaken negative behavior. Actually, our increased attention may encourage future misconduct." (page 57). Therefore, we need to give our children plenty of positive reinforcement.

I successfully used the techniques of extinction and reinforcement to eliminate fighting between Darcy and Mark, when they were six and four years old. I told them that every time I noticed they were playing together nicely for a period of time, I would reward them each with one cookie. I ignored the times they fought, but rewarded them when they played well together.

After a while, I heard Darcy tell Mark, "Let's play nicely so we can get a cookie." Soon Darcy would call from the bedroom, "Hey, Mom, we're playing together. Can we have a cookie?" I would not give them cookies at that moment, because I had told them I had to notice their good behavior, without them asking. But within a short time, I would go in with the reward. As a result, cooperative play increased around our house.

A friend of mine applies the same principles by rewarding stars on a chart for playing nicely together. After her children earn a predetermined number of stars, they go on an outing, to an amusement park for example.

I also used these principles to correct Darcy's whining. When children whine, our usual response is to tell them to stop whining. Without realizing it, we encourage them to whine by rewarding them with attention—and we're usually saying it in a whining way. We compound the problem if we have difficulty immediately paying attention to their pleasant-toned conversation. Therefore, we must concentrate on responding to the favorable behavior with praise. Then we'll see a change in our children's tone of voice.

To correct Darcy's behavior, I told her that I would not listen to anything she said in a whining tone. If she had a pleasant tone of voice, I immediately paid attention to her and praised her for speaking nicely.

I added an extra part, too. When she whined, I put my hand on the top of my head to remind her I could hear her but couldn't answer because of her tone of voice. That way, she wouldn't think I couldn't hear her and whine even more loudly. At times, she burst out laughing when I put my hand on my head. That helped her change her attitude.

NATURAL CONSEQUENCES

Another method of discipline is natural consequences. This means that we simply allow nature to run its course, knowing that it will teach the child something. The story of the prodigal son (see Luke 15) illustrates this principle. The father in Jesus' parable allowed his son to suffer the natural consequences of his disobedience, and the son eventually repented.

If it had been my son who wanted to leave, I would have been tempted to warn and scold him, and not let him take any money with him. But he probably would have returned as rebellious as he was when he left. The wise father in the parable, however, received back a humbled son, who never would forget that lesson of life.

This method also works well with an under-eating child. Natural consequences allow him to get hungry if he refuses to eat. As soon as he sees that we're not going to get upset when he doesn't eat, the challenge of the battle disappears—it's no fun to be finicky for nothing. And I can assure you, the hunger reflex that God has built into him will be a greater motivation to eat than all our interference.

Our responsibility is to allow no in-between-meal snacking or junk foods, and to provide good, well-balanced meals. Eating those meals is his responsibility.

LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Our final choice of disciplining methods is logical consequences. When a natural consequence is not connected with a wrong behavior, we must intervene and supply a consequence. As with natural consequences, children learn from the outcome of their misbehavior. With logical consequences, however, we structure the consequence. And as the name implies, the consequence is "logically" related to the misdeed.

Here are some examples:

1. A two-year-old child carelessly spills her milk. Logical consequence: Give her a cup that doesn't spill or that has a dripless spout.
2. A child knows how to dry dishes properly, but one evening does a sloppy job. Logical consequence: He must dry the dishes over again.

3. A five-year-old consistently leaves his toys all over the living room. Logical consequence: Remove the toys for a specific time. Each time he repeats the misbehavior, increase the time he can't play with them.
4. Maggie, age seven, is often late for school because she gets ready slowly. Logical consequence: She must go to bed thirty minutes earlier at night or wake up thirty minutes earlier in the morning. In both cases, if she's still late for school, allow her to suffer the consequences determined by the school.
5. Two-year-old Kyle continually runs out into the street after being instructed not to. Logical consequence: He must play in the house or back yard for a specified amount of time.
6. Three-year-old Mark screams at the table if the food isn't served fast enough or if it's not what he wanted. Logical consequence: Take him to his bedroom to stay until he stops crying and can be happy at the table. Remove him from the table immediately each time he starts to cry.
7. Susie fights with the neighborhood children when they come to play at her house. Logical consequence: Have the neighborhood children leave for a specified amount of time.

The logical consequences method of discipline is one of the most effective. It eliminates the power struggles that ensue when we try to force children to do something. It also teaches children responsibility for their own actions and decisions. We can have difficulty using logical consequences, though, because it is hard to remove ourselves from the situations and allow our children to learn the lessons. We must come to the point of letting our children take responsibility for their behavior. We must realize that we make things worse when we interfere, but we help them mature if we stay out of it.

Although logical consequences work best with a child who can understand the cause and effect principle, they also can be used with a younger child. For instance, if he doesn't use a toy properly, remove it for a while. If he throws food at a meal, excuse him from the table. If he has a temper tantrum, calmly put him in another room and close the door, or remove yourself from his sight. (A temper tantrum isn't any fun without an audience).

Disciplining children is not an easy, once-a-day-and-then-they-will-be-perfect kind of task. It is a continual, sometimes wearying job that requires our strength and dependence upon God. But there are some encouraging times. Besides, we also are growing through the process. As we help them mature, God teaches us to mature and grow more like His loving Son, Jesus. These are hard lessons for them and for us. But as God breaks and molds us and our children, He puts us back together again, without the weak parts.

We're all like rough diamonds, whose uneven edges must be chipped away to reveal the beauty and reflection of Jesus underneath. And as we patiently discipline our children, we'll see Jesus become radiant within them. I've seen that happen within our family. Over time as God gave me greater and greater patience and I was able to discipline Darcy and Mark consistently and lovingly, they became better behaved. No, not perfect—because I'm not either. But they were more obedient. And today, they are wonderful adults, both self-controlled and responsible. And

the most amazing thing is that they both appreciate us as parents. Darcy even said the other day, “You two are the greatest parents on the planet!”

Your children will most likely say the same thing to you some day! Help that to happen now by disciplining in love, not anger.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Read Luke 15 about the prodigal son. How can you apply that parable to your disciplining as you consider when you can use natural consequences with your children?

2. What instruction do these verses give about spanking:

Proverbs 13:24:

Proverbs 22:15:

Proverbs 23:13-14:

3. What does Proverbs 19:18 say about discipline?

4. What should be our attitude and response when our child behaves or speaks wisely? (Proverbs 23:15-16)

5. What insights do you gain from Proverbs 29:15, 17?

6. What do you hope your children will say to you when they are grown? (Proverbs 31:27-29)

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Kathy Collard Miller is amazed at the work God has done in her life and the open doors He created for her. He delivered her from abusing her toddler and also healed her and her husband's dysfunctional marriage. Today, she and her adult daughter have a fabulous relationship and in June 2020, Kathy and Larry will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. They write and speak together and are lay counselors. Kathy has spoken in over 35 US states and 9 foreign countries. Her 57 books include biblical commentaries, compilations, Christian Living topics, and women's Bible studies. Her most recent book, co-written with her husband, is *God's Intriguing Questions: 60 New Testament Devotions Revealing God's Nature*. Visit her at www.KathyCollardMiller.com

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- *Heart Wisdom*: ten lessons about different topics covered in the biblical book of Proverbs.

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