

Balance Grace And Truth

Parenthood- Part 6

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Introduction:

How many of you see yourself just a little bit in that video? Be honest, raise your hands. Today, we are going to talk about a pretty unpopular topic, but very, very necessary for great parenting. It is called discipline. Honestly, for our family, for Trish and me, discipline was fairly easy when we only had one child. We had a little two-on-one defense going. Then we had our second kid and we went to man-to-man defense. From three on, you guessed it, baby. We've been in zones the whole time. You take these two, I've got those two.

Let's define, first of all, a working definition for discipline. In response to my promotional e-mail this week, one mom wrote: *Hi Andy! Does the Bible say screaming like a mad lunatic is effective discipline? Just kidding...sort of. :-)*

If you are taking notes, we will define it this way. **Discipline is correction driven by love.** *Correction...driven by love.* Our task is to take truth...what is right and wrong...and apply it to our children's actions and words in a way that is driven by love, by grace. It is a balance of grace and truth.

Discipline is correction--not because we are powerful parents... and we are exercising our power and authority-- but it is driven by our heart to love our children. Hebrews 12:5-6 says:

Hebrews 12:5-6

New Living Translation (NLT)

⁵ *And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children?^[a] He said,*

*"My child,^[b] don't make light of the LORD's discipline,
and don't give up when he corrects you.*

⁶ *For the LORD disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes each one he accepts as his child."^[c]*

The Bible says (of the *encouraging words* from God... we see right here- good discipline isn't negative- it is to be positive- it is to be driven by love...God's discipline is for our best). The author says, *"My child, do not make light of the Lord's,"* what? *"Of the Lord's discipline and do not give up (lose heart) when he corrects you."* Why? "Because the Lord disciplines," whom? "The Lord disciplines those that he loves." It is correction driven by love.

How important is this?

Proverbs 19:18

New Living Translation (NLT)

¹⁸ Discipline your children while there is hope.
Otherwise you will ruin their lives.

“Discipline your children...while there is...” what? “Hope.” Here’s the challenge: *“Otherwise- you will ruin their lives”*. The NIV says: *do not be a willing party to their death.*

Listen to how this plays out in a real-life story where a father did not discipline his children. 1 Samuel 3:

¹¹ And the LORD said to Samuel: “See, I am about to do something in Israel that will make the ears of everyone who hears about it tingle. ¹² At that time I will carry out against Eli everything I spoke against his family—from beginning to end. ¹³ For I told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons blasphemed God,^[a] and he failed to restrain them. ¹⁴ Therefore I swore to the house of Eli, ‘The guilt of Eli’s house will never be atoned for by sacrifice or offering.’”

Eli knew about his sons’ sin...His sons’ lack of fear of God...His sons’ corruption as priests for God... but he failed to correct them. And because he didn’t discipline- his sons died and generations to come suffered.

Parents, we need to understand that there is a major battle going on for who is going to be in charge in our households, and this is a battle that we must win, and we must win it decisively. If you find yourself consistently nagging and yelling and bribing and threatening, you are losing the battle and the tide must turn, and it must turn now.

Many parents will say, *“I don’t want to be mean to my kids. I don’t want to discipline my kids.”* We’ve got to stop- and teach others around us...for the good of society—that ***discipline is not something you do TO your child...it is something you do FOR your child!*** I like the way that Zig Ziglar said it. He said, *“A child who has not been disciplined with love by his little world will be disciplined without love by the great big world.”*

Discipline. It’s correction driven by love. It is taking truth and teaching it with grace.

Let’s talk for a little while about **undisciplined parents**, and chances are, for all parents, you may see a little bit of yourself in some of these different examples.

The first type of undisciplined parent is the lifeguard parents.

What are lifeguard parents? They are the parents that often rescue a child from consequences. Little Johnny’s in trouble. Super mom sweeps in to save the day. *“Oh, little Johnny, it’s going to be okay. I’ll save you again!”*

How do you know if you are a lifeguard parent? Well, you are a lifeguard parent if you delivered little Johnny his lunch three or more times in the last semester because he forgot his lunch. This is really you if little Johnny's a sophomore in college...It's not allowing our children to face the consequences of their own sins.

Why is it so important to let them face their consequences? God's word tells us this. Galatians 6:7, "Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked." Help me out. "A man," does what? "A man reaps what he ... what he sows." In other words, in God's divine economy, He set up the world with a system of consequences. You live according to His Word and there will be blessings. You live outside of the parameters of His Word, and there will be consequences. We must give our children the gift of facing the consequences of bad decisions.

For example, if your kid hasn't prepared for their science project, at the last minute, you don't sweep in and save the day and do it for them. What we must teach them is, *"If you don't prepare well, you are not as likely to succeed."* Say your kids are going to a friend's. You give them some lunch money but they decide to spend it on Pokemon cards. They call and say, *"Mom- I need more cash!"* Instead of saying, *"Oh, poor baby. Got to have a lunch. Here's some more money."* Instead, we say, *"You know what? Spending your money on something else, no eating today."* We don't save them from the consequences.

Here's a wild idea, let's say you have a sixteen-year-old who wants to drive. What if you said to that sixteen-year-old, *"Get a job."* I know. Don't be upset. I know that's controversial and way out there to make our children work in community where it is so common to see sixteen-year-olds driving thirty-five thousand dollar cars for doing nothing. What if instead we said, *"You want some money, work. Earn some money. Buy you a thousand dollar car for cash. And, oh, by the way, if you get a speeding ticket, you are going to pay. There are consequences."*

Lifeguard parents sweep in to rescue the kids from the consequences. How many would say, *"Yeah, I do that. I often rescue my kids."*

Let's deal with another type of undisciplined parent. We could call it the Etch-A-Sketch parent. These are the ones that are often inconsistent.

What is an Etch-A-Sketch parent? Well, first of all, how many of you know what an Etch-A-Sketch is?

An Etch-A-Sketch is a little box about the size of my Bible. It's got little knobs on it, and what happens if you turn the little knob? What do you make? The lines, right? And then, what happens if you shake it up? Where did it go? **They disappear. A lot of us, we've got some lines in our households, and then, the next day, the lines move.** And our kids are saying, *"Where are the lines? Where are the boundaries?"* We are inconsistent oftentimes as parents.

Scripture says this, Proverbs 29:15, 17:

¹⁵ *A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom,
but a child left undisciplined disgraces its mother.*

¹⁷ *Discipline your children, and they will give you peace;
they will bring you the delights you desire.*

The Bible says that discipline and a reprimand or correction brings wisdom. It says that when we discipline our children...they will bring peace and delights. These are promises from God that result from godly discipline applied consistently over time.

Notice, scripture doesn't say discipline them today and then not tomorrow. Have one line here today and then shake it up and let the line move tomorrow. A lot of our kids want to know, where are the lines? Why are they always moving?

I understand what it is like to struggle here. I can be inconsistent. I get tired sometimes, and plus, there are just so many dog gone kids at my house, you know. And I'm like, "Oh, no, not again." And it is very, very dangerous on my part. I can be Nazi dad one day, all in line, and the next day I'm like cruise ship director dad, "He's the love boat," you know. And it is inconsistent and it can be very, very dangerous.

How many of you can say, *"I am Etch-A-Sketch sometimes. I can be very, very inconsistent."* Thank you guys for your honesty.

Let's deal with another type. This is what I call the split-decision parents.

The split-decision parents. We're not talking about parents that make decisions too quickly. We're talking here about parents that are often un-unified. They are split. They disagree. Amos 3:3, *"Do two walk together unless they have,"* what? Say it out loud, *"Unless they have agreed to do so."*

One of the most important things we can do as parents is to agree to keep a unified stance in front of our children.

Now, let's talk for a minute about the real world. Kids are master tacticians. They are master battle strategists. They know that to get what they want—one effective strategy is to divide and conquer with mom and dad. They learn quickly to play one against the other.

This can happen in every home- but is especially effective in situations like divorce where mom and dad don't even like each other. In any case- parents- we have to work to put forward a unified front. This can be tough even in the greatest marriage- but our kids can't see a chink in the armor. If you need to disagree with each other, and you will, do it behind closed doors. In front of the kids, you stand unified. Do not show any weakness or they will take you out the very first chance they have.

This plays out in so many situations... but it is so important that parents back each other at all times... that parents show absolute respect for the other in front of the kids. We keep a unified stance no matter what.

How many of you would say, "Yeah, I'm guilty. Oftentimes I'm un-unified in front of our kids. We are divided." Thanks for your honesty.

Let's do this. Let's shift gears. We've looked at some of our own faults, and I pray that God will continue to remind you when you find yourself straying from what He wants from you. Let's look for a minute, though, at some things that we as parents should expect of our children and of ourselves. There are three of them.

Number one, we should expect first-time and cheerful obedience from our children. Say that with me...

First time obedience, let's talk about it. Scripture says this, Colossians 3:20, "*Children, obey your parents after they've warned you several times.*" Scripture does not say that... maybe we should read it again. The Bible says: "*Children, always obey your parents, for this pleases the Lord.*" "*Children **always** obey your parents*"

When should children obey? Always! ...Some versions say "*Children obey your parents **in everything***". How much should children obey? "In everything." Why do they obey "always" or "in everything"? "For," it what? "This pleases the Lord." We must teach our kids that God is happy with them when they obey mom and dad.

Notice what scripture does not say. Scripture does not say "*Children, obey your mom and dad after they say, 'Cut that out. Stop that. Don't make me come over there. I mean it this time. I really mean it. I mean it. Don't make me count to three. You know I will. One, two, don't give me that look. Two and-a-half,*"

Rather than all the warnings and stalling and yelling-- we expect first-time obedience, just as God expects it from us. And not only do we expect outward obedience, we expect inward obedience, as well. We demand cheerful obedience. Look at what scripture says. Philippians 2:14: ¹⁴ *Do everything without complaining and arguing. Help me out, "Do everything without," what? "Do everything without complaining," or without what? "Without arguing."*

Put that up on your refrigerator, a little memory verse for your family. Do everything without complaining or arguing. Why is that so important? This is important (here's a great maxim for parenting)... **Discipline more for attitude than actions.** Not only does outward obedience matter, but so does inward obedience. We could make the argument that inward obedience is more important than outward obedience. It might just be more important sometimes to discipline for a bad attitude than bad actions.

Why is this true? Listen to Jesus' words in Matthew 15:18-19:

¹⁸ *But the words you speak come from the heart—that's what defiles you.* ¹⁹ *For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander.*

As parents, we are character builders. We must concern ourselves with knowing and seeing and analyzing and correcting our children's hearts- their motivations- their attitudes. What goes on on the inside will eventually come out in words or deeds. We must shape hearts.

For example, what you will see a lot of times, dad comes home and says, "Son, I heard you were back talking your mom." "Was not." "Yes, you were, Son." "Was not." "Son, you can't back talk your mom." "Oh, whatever, dad." "Son, don't talk to me that way." "Fine!" "Son, you give me one more smart talk, you are going to your room." "Yeah, yeah, yeah." "To your room." "I'm not going to my room." "Yes, you are." "No, I'm not." "Fine, dad." Stomp, stomp, SLAM! Dad sits back, "*I showed him.*"

No, you didn't, dad. What you did is-- you got outward obedience, but you still have inward rebellion. And, the problem with inward rebellion is that it is going to come back out again in outward rebellion until the heart problem is fixed. We must discipline as much for attitude as we do for action, and when the attitude is right, the actions generally follow. We expect first-time and cheerful obedience.

Let's look at another thing that we expect. **We should never discipline in anger...not under any circumstances.** Let me just say, there is way too *much of this going on in our world today.* *The Bible tells us clearly, Ephesians 4:26 says:* ²⁶ *And "don't sin by letting anger control you."*^[a] *Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry...* The Bible says... "Don't" what "SIN" by what "letting anger control you". Some versions say: *In your anger, do not sin.*

Where does your anger flair up most? The car? The supermarket? When does it flair up most? When you are tired? Hungry? Sad about something else and then your kids need something?

We have to be careful not to discipline in anger.

That brings up what is admittedly a very controversial subject when it comes to discipline. I am just going to lay it out there. I can feel the negative emails coming. I can feel them now. I can sense them coming into my box.

At our house, we spank. I just want to tell you that. I know, up front, that this is a very politically incorrect stance. I know that, but I am going to tell you. Until the day I die, I am going to stand by the fact that it is a Biblically correct stance, and it is one of the many effective ways to discipline. We said last week that being a great parent is counter-cultural. Spanking is certainly counter-cultural.

There are proper ways to spank. Proper times to spank. I try never to use my hand. We have a little friend at home we call “Mr. Spoon.” It just so happens that Silas and “Mr. Spoon” have the most frequent visits and know each other very well. ☺ Often times I’ll just ask Silas, while he is deciding to obey or tell the truth... Does “Mr. Spoon” need to pay a visit to our house tonight? His little buns tighten up.

We find spanking to be an effective preventative tool as well as an option for effective punishment. If one of our children disobeys, we will take them into the pantry or their bedroom, one-by-one, so there’s no humiliation or embarrassment, and we will decide on discipline. It may be a loss of a privilege. It may be an added responsibility. It may be a spanking. We will hug them. We will love them, and it is very effective. Not politically correct, but Biblically correct.

Now, those of you who are angry right now, “*Oh, my pastor abuses his children.*” Think about this with me. People that are opposed to spanking-- part of the argument is that spanking develops angry kids, rebellious, violent kids. But, really, to analyze and test that belief—we need to look at one of the first generations that wasn’t spanked.

I am in my late thirties. I went to a private school. If you acted up too many times, the teacher took you to this little room where all the utilities were and he/she would get out a wooden paddle with big with holes in it and bust your butt until you were singing soprano.

I don’t know when that stopped exactly. But- ask yourself- are kids today less angry? Better behaved? More mature? Socially better adjusted? More confident? Need I go on?

Okay, at our house we spank. If you choose to at your house, if that’s the direction that God leads you, never, ever do so in anger. You never, ever, ever discipline in anger. Is that understood? Okay?

First of all, we expect first-time and cheerful obedience. We also agree never to discipline in anger.

Number three, we will discipline promptly and with instruction and reconciliation. We will discipline promptly and with instruction and reconciliation. Ephesians 6:4: ⁴ *Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.* Another version says-- “Fathers, do not exasperate your children. Instead, bring them up in the training and the instruction of the Lord.”

Let’s talk about instruction. The first thing we do with our kids is, we talk to them about what they did, and I ask the question, “***What did you do wrong?***” We must instruct them/teach them what is wrong, because a lot of times, they still don’t think it is their fault.

They are mad at their brother and sister. “My brother took my Barbie away from me so I hit him on the head ‘cause he deserved it.” No, we don’t hit with Barbie’s. What did you do wrong? “Well, it’s his fault.” No. Tell me what you did wrong, and what we have to do is bring them to a point of admission that they have sinned and an understanding of what they did wrong.

Once they admit that, then the second question that I have is, **“How could you handle it better next time?”** This is instruction. This is training them ahead of time that God always gives us a way out from whatever we are tempted. What is the way out? Let’s name it ahead of time so that we can make the right decision next time.

Instruction, and then after instruction, there is reconciliation. What is that? *You did wrong. This is the punishment, and now, you are forgiven.* We hug. We kiss. We pray. And we go about our day, never to bring it up again. Why is this so important?

This is so important—because, here, in real time, our kids begin to grasp the key elements of the Gospel. We all do wrong things. We must be punished. This plants within our child an understanding of what the cross of Jesus Christ is all about. They start to understand, maybe intuitively at first and then at an even deeper level later on that our sin must be punished, and Jesus took the punishment for our sin.

When we accept Jesus as the Forgiver and Leader of our lives—then God declares us forgiven because justice has been satisfied. And it teaches our children the principles of God’s divine economy even before they are able to understand, and one day they will be able to say, *“Yes, I am saved by grace because Jesus paid the price for me,”* **and they will not take their salvation for granted, because for the rest of their life, they will be devoted to serving and living for the One who gave His life for them.**