Scriptures and Scriptural Thoughts on Discipline

First, let's look at what biblical love is not:

- It is not love to raise a child who lacks self-discipline and is controlled by his or her desires, whether for attention, food, material demands and entertainment, or seeking to gain something for nothing.

- It is not love to allow a child to shrug off responsibility for his own actions and not to accept the consequences of those actions. Nor is it love to allow your child to manipulate, control, or justify his or her disobedience.

- It is not love to carelessly or intentionally provoke anger in your children. "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Now let's look at what biblical love is and the proper way to train and discipline a child:

- Love is actively training and teaching our children - diligently (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)! Put consistent and loving effort into being an active parent, daily.

- Love is providing for your children's physical needs. (2 Corinthians 12:14)


- Love does involve the promotion of biblical teaching to your children early (Psalm 34:11). The best teachings are by example. Children imitate what they see more than they do what they're told.

- Follow God's pattern as He disciplines us for our own good (Hebrews 12:5-11). Be steadfast in correction, yet giving encouragement and praise where it is due.

Scriptures on Discipline:

- If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. (Hebrews 12:8)

- Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him. (Proverbs 22:15)

- Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. (Proverbs 23:13-14)

- Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal. (Job 5:17-18)

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

- Blows and wounds cleanse away evil, and beatings purge the inmost being. (Proverbs 20:30)

- Blessed is the man you discipline, 0 LORD, the man you teach from your law. (Psalm 94:12)

- 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 our spirits and live! (Hebrews 12:9)

- Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines for our good, that we may share in his holiness. (Hebrews 12:10)
~ Dare To Discipline ~
Adapted from Dr. James Dobson’s book.

1. **Developing respect for parents is the critical factor in child management.**
   - This respect will be important for his future outlook on school authorities, law enforcement officers, employers, and others they live and work with.
   - Most corporal punishment should be done by time the child is starting first grade. It should taper off and stop when the child is between the ages of 10-12.
   - Spanking should begin and be reserved for the times when children express willful, defiant disrespect, disobedience or rebellion: “I will not!” “No!” “You shut up!” “I hate you!”
     - Spanking should not be administered for mistakes or acts of irresponsibility; it is reserved for acts of haughty disobedience.
     - Usually necessary shortly before age 2.
     - When nose-to-nose confrontation occurs between you and your child, it is not the time to have a discussion about the value of obedience. It is not an occasion for time-out. You’ve drawn a line in the sand, and they’ve purposefully pushed their toe across it. **Who is going to win?**
     - Parents must always win the early confrontations with their children, or later confrontations will be even more difficult to win. A classic quote from Dr. Dobson is, “If you can’t make a five-year-old pick-up his toys, it is unlikely you will exercise much control during his most defiant time of life”.
     - The time to begin disarming the teen-age time-bomb is 12 years before it arrives!
   - **Cautions on spanking:**
     - Never be harsh with your children. If you’re trying to discipline out of anger you will lose their respect and the benefit of the lesson you’re trying to teach; “I love you too much to allow you to act like that”.
     - Beating and/or abuse is not spanking. If you’re lashing out in anger, it is not a spanking!
     - Be sure you’re in complete control of your emotions and only apply enough force so that the child understands that it would be better to comply with the rules of the home.
   - **Summary statement,** When you are definitely challenged, win decisively. When the child asks, "Who's in charge?" tell him. When he mutters, "Who loves me?" take him in your arms and surround him with affection. Treat him with respect and dignity, and expect the same from him. Then begin to enjoy the sweet benefits of competent parenthood.

2. **The best opportunity to communicate often occurs after a disciplinary event.**
   *Nothing brings a parent and child closer together than for the mother or father to win decisively after being defiantly challenged. After emotional ventilation, the child will often want to crumple to the breast of his parent, and he should be welcomed with open, warm, loving arms. At that moment you can talk heart to heart. You can tell him how much you love him, and how important he is to you. You can explain why he was disciplined and how he can avoid the difficulty next time.*
   This kind of communication is often impossible if the child is resentful for being put in a comer.
3. Control without nagging.

Nagging is the result of poor follow through, not having a system of discipline, and lack of consistency. It quickly becomes a bad habit. Parents resort to using anger to get action, rather than using action to get action. It isn’t effective.

- Empty threats create unnecessary frustration in a household:
  - When parents want something accomplished, they progress through graduated steps of phony anger, beginning with calm and ending with a red flush and a threat.
  - Children realize that they don’t really need to obey until the flash-point is near.
  - Since empty threats are used to control the child, the parent has to get mad frequently! The relationship is contaminated and each day is ended with a terrible headache. The parent can never count on instant obedience because it takes time to work up a believable amount of anger.
  - How much better to explain the concept of obeying the first time, and then explain the negative consequence(s) for disobeying, and then following through with stated discipline. After just a few such instances of calm, actionable discipline, the child will respond immediately rather than waiting for escalation.
  - Never underestimate a child’s awareness that he is breaking the rules. Consider why they respond differently to different parents/adults. They know exactly what each one’s tolerance level is.

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### Discipline Vs. Punishment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline:</th>
<th>Punishment:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Logically connected to the misbehavior</td>
<td>Arbitrary retaliation for misbehavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intended to teach responsible behavior</td>
<td>Intended to teach blindly obedient behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administered in a firm and calm manner</td>
<td>Often delivered in an atmosphere of anger and resentment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied respectfully</td>
<td>Dished out Disrespectfully</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow the child to participate</td>
<td>Dictated by the authority</td>
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THE SCIENCE AND STATISTICS BEHIND SPANKING…the following excerpts are taken from the Akron Law Review, Vol. 42, No. 243, 2009. This is a 76 page law review. About ¾ of it is foot-notes detailing the various research which supports spanking. To download the full review, go to: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1357669 and then click on “Download”… towards the top of the page.

**THE SCIENCE AND STATISTICS BEHIND SPANKING SUGGEST THAT LAWS ALLOWING CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ARE IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD**

In 1979, Sweden started an international trend by becoming the first country to ban spanking. While such lawmaking may seem harmless, even commendable, the empirical data indicate that a spanking ban is a grave mistake. With spanking bans have come increased rates of child abuse, aggressive parenting, and youth violence. Indeed, criminal records suggest that children raised under a spanking ban are much more likely to be involved in crime than other children. This makes sense. To function well in society, children need to learn that misbehavior has negative consequences.

#12. (collectively showing the rates of indoor abuses when the perpetrator personally knows the child 0-6 years old rising every year, from 99 in 1981 to 583 in 1994). Sweden’s rate of juvenile assaults has risen more than seven times since the spanking ban in 1979.
Yet many people want to deprive children of spanking, even though the most sound research suggests it is not harmful, and is often more helpful than other common discipline methods. On average, spanking seems to reduce aggression, defiance, and antisocial behavior better than mental punishments like timeout, reasoning, privilege removal, threats, verbal power assertion, ignoring, love withdrawal, or diverting.

#17. See, e.g., Larzelere, Meta-Analysis, supra note 15, at 4 (surveying every child discipline study between 1979 and 2005 that analyzed: (1) spanking and at least one mental discipline tactic using similar research methods; (2) children that were, on average, less than thirteen years old when disciplined; and (3) at least one child outcome. This meta-analysis compares outcomes of physical and mental discipline methods, and finds that outcomes rarely favor mental discipline methods, whereas customary spanking typically reduces noncompliance or antisocial behavior more than mental discipline methods);

#18. See, e.g., Larzelere, Meta-Analysis, supra note 15, at 20 tbl. IV, 22 tbl. V, 24 tbl. VI (showing spanking to be better at controlling aggression than mental punishments like timeout, reasoning, scolding, “non-contact” punishment, privilege removal, love withdrawal, or diverting. Also showing that calm and controlled spanking and spanking in response to defiance is uniformly more beneficial than other punishments);

The Law of Reinforcement, “Behavior which achieves desirable consequences will recur.” (this is not used to combat defiance, but rather to increase your child’s level of responsibility)

Specific Principles to maximize the benefit of this Law:

1. Rewards must be granted immediately.
   - Children have neither the mental capacity nor the maturity to keep a long-range goal in mind.
   - Parents complain about lack of industriousness in children, without recognizing that this is a learned behavior. The child repeats the behavior which he considers to have been successful.
   - A child may be cooperative and helpful because he enjoys the effect it has on his parents. Another may sulk and pout for the same reason.

Chore Chart (beginning around age 4, but can be modified for increased age or maturity).
   a. Create a chart with responsibilities/behaviors you want to instill.
   b. Immediate Reinforcement is Key. Each evening colored dots or stars should be placed by the responsibilities/behaviors that were done satisfactorily.
   c. A penny/nickel should also be given for each item done satisfactorily in the day; if more than 3 items are missed in one day, no pennies/nickels should be given.
   e. Once child masters a chore/behavior, remove it and add something else.
   f. Suggested “Chores/Responsibilities/Behaviors”:
      - Brush teeth without being told
      - Straightened room before bedtime
      - Picked up clothes without being told
      - Emptied trash without being told
      - Minded Mommy today
      - Minded Daddy today
      - Said my prayers tonight
      - Was kind to my brother/sister today
      - Took my vitamin
      - Said “Thank you” and “Please” today
      - Went to bed last night without complaining
      - Gave clean water to dog today
      - Washed my hands and came to the table when called

Read p. 57
Specific Principles to maximize the benefit of the Law of Reinforcement (continued):

2. Rewards need not be material in nature.
   - Children and adults of all ages seek constant satisfaction of their emotional needs, including the desire for love, social acceptance and self respect. Additionally they hope to find excitement, intellectual stimulation, entertainment and pleasure.
   - Verbal reinforcement should permeate the entire parent-child relationship. Too often are communication is comprised of “don’ts”. We should spend more time rewarding them for the behavior we do admire…even if the reward is nothing more than a sincere compliment. Make sure it is specific, warranted praise, not generalized flattery.

3. Any behavior which is learned through reinforcement can be eliminated if the reward is withheld long enough.
   - Fact: Unreinforced behavior will eventually disappear. This is called Extinction.
   - Examples: Walleye in tank with minnows separated by glass panel. Elephant restrained by small rope and thin stake.
   - Why does a child whine instead of speaking normally? Because parents have reinforced whining! As long as child talks in normal voice, they’re ignored. When they switch to the grating, irritating, whining voice we tune back in to see what is wrong. Their whining voice gets results. Their normal voice doesn’t. We’ve just created a whiner!
   - To extinguish the whining, you just reverse the reinforcement. “I’m not going to listen when you’re whining. When you call me politely, in a nice voice, that is when I listen”. Give immediate attention when the they talk normally, and absolutely ignore them when they whine. The desirable consequences will recur.
   - Children can be taught to overcome (Extinction) their fear of the dark by positive reinforcement. Use candy for incrementally longer periods of time spent in a dark bedroom by themselves with you standing immediately outside of the room and the door initially open. Begin with 2 seconds and gradually increase as appropriate.

4. Parents & Teachers are also vulnerable to reinforcement.
   - How do children act when they want something from you?
   - Father has a low frustration tolerance for his children. When they fall short he yells at them, which seems to make them mind. He has been reinforced for his screaming and becomes a loud, aggressive parent.
   - Be aware of your own reaction to reinforcement, and make be in control of this tool.

5. Parents often reinforce undesirable behavior and weaken the behavior(s) they value.
   - It is remarkable easy to reward undesirable behavior by allowing it to succeed.
   - If child always cries at dinner and guests are coming, you may ignore it initially, but he knows you’ll give in if he gets loud enough. He’s learned that he has to cry LOUDLY to get what he wants.
   - For tough decisions, Sally’s mom always initially says “No”…in order to buy her some time to actually think about the request. However, Sally’s daughter knows that “No” doesn’t really mean “No”. It actually means, “Maybe”. So, the harder she argues and complains, the more likely she is to turn that “No” into a “Yes”. Sally has taught her daughter that arguing, sulking, pouting, door-slamming and bargaining are beneficial.
     - Don’t take a stand on an issue until you’ve thought it out. Then stand firm!
     - Once the child/teen learns that “No” means “No”, less time will be spent arguing.
   - If a baby is quickly picked up each time they cry, they learn the connection between tears and adult attention.
     - If necessary, wait outside the door of their room until they quit crying before entering. This reinforces the pauses rather than the crying.
1-2-3 Magic! Excerpted from book of same name by Thomas W. Phelan, Ph.D

Without emotion and without wasted time, you can effectively discipline your children! If your child’s misbehavior is not worthy of a spanking, this is a good method to improve their behavior.

- Once child begins a behavior that you’ve already warned them against, look them straight in the eye and firmly state, “That’s 1”. If they don’t stop said behavior within 2 seconds you firmly state, “That’s 2”. If they don’t stop said behavior within 2 more seconds you firmly state, “That’s 3, Take a Time-Out”. (1 minute for each year of age)
- Initially you may have to carry them to their room (for older children, it’s a choice…go to your room for time-out, or forfeit 1 dollar of your allowance).
- You don’t talk about the issue or allow them to escalate the issue by arguing. If they start to argue after you state “That’s 1”, immediately progress to, “That’s 2”…for arguing
- How long before you start the count over? Kid’s time perspective is about 5 minutes either side of “right now”.
- What if they tear up their room during the time-out? Leave them to deal with their own consequences. Don’t buy replacements and don’t clean it up for them. After about 3 peaceful time-outs, you can help them clean it up.
  - If you feel that your child is liable to tear up the room, remove anything valuable or “dangerous” prior to beginning this program.
- Obviously some misbehaviors are too violent/bad for time-out to be considered sufficient.

Additional Tools:

- **Docking System**: Set amount of allowance to be docked for certainly specific misbehaviors which are already known. Once misbehavior occurs, write the amount to be docked in a public place. Increment this each time and then dock allowance prior to paying out at end of week.
- **Kitchen Timers**: Kids naturally are competitive. You give them a time when they need to have a certain task/chore accomplished. You can race them or you can give them a “prize” if they accomplish it in the allotted time.
- **Natural Consequences**: Instead of nagging at your pre-teen/teen to fix their own lunch and dress warmly, let them experience “life” without these things. They won’t die and they’ll learn a valuable lesson.
  - **Always running late for school?** Take younger ones in their pajamas. For older ones, don’t do anything for them. Explain that you’re only going to give one 5 minute warning before leaving (announce the time the night before) and then leave at that time.
    - May necessitate explaining to teachers that you’re in the midst of independence training, and will most likely mean that the child is going to get “burned” a few times. But, they will learn and grow from these experiences.
    - This will provide more peace in your life and put responsibility where it belongs.

**Consistency** is extremely important. Not to follow through once blows any system or method that you’re implementing. Consistency makes it easier because you don’t get pushed as much. They know when you say something you mean it. They don’t have to wonder whether you’ll follow through this time. As a result it is easier and you have to discipline less often, and a word of warning goes a long way.
**Home Rules** must be clear to all and followed by all living under this roof, including the parents. You create the rules in conjunction with your children’s input (both for the rules and the correction actions for not following the rules). These must be written out and displayed for maximum benefit.

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**HOME RULES CONTRACT**

**What is the Purpose of a Home Rules Contract?**

The primary purpose of a Home Rules Contract is for **teens to be held accountable for their behavior** while allowing parents to maintain a reasonable amount of control. A Home Rules Contract will teach teens that there are consequences to breaking rules, the knowledge of which hopefully will transfer in the teen's mind to school rules as well as the legal system.

**Steps to Creating a Home Rules Contract**

1. Identify a maximum of five (5) problem behaviors that you feel need to be improved.
2. Specifically identify what the expectation is for each behavior.
3. Specifically state what the privileges and consequences will be when a teen is either following the rules or chooses to break the rules.
4. Set a date that the contract may be revised and/or negotiated.
   
   **VERY IMPORTANT - Consult with other parental figures to make sure that ALL ARE IN AGREEMENT AND WILLING TO ENFORCE THE CONTRACT AS WRITTEN.**

The items below are only suggestions to get you started. Parents must take their own individual circumstances and priorities into account when setting up the individual items in a Home Rules Contract. Some items that might be considered priorities, other than those listed below, might include profanity or abusive language towards other family members, homework issues for students with poor grades, and violent behavior towards family members, including pushing, shoving, and slapping.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A list of possible priorities to include in a Home Rules Contract includes:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Curfew</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Chores</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. School behavior and grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Smoking</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Telephone use</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Computer use</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Use of the car</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Alcohol/drug use</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Expression of anger or violence, including profanity</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Conflict resolution (helpful when two siblings are at each other's throats)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Running away</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Medication issues and compliance (for those who take regular medicines, such as Ritalin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Attendance at therapy sessions</td>
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**NOTE:** For the safety of everybody involved, police should be called for **ALL** violent episodes that occur on the part of the teen with the perceived intent of injuring a family member or destroying property that belongs to other family members. **Violence that has no consequences will continue to escalate** and could eventually result in a serious incident, so this type of behavior needs to be halted immediately by allowing the teen to experience serious consequences for the violent behavior (police, charges and possible court date). It sounds harsh to call the police on your own child, but it is better to have the teen learn from you that violence will never be tolerated, and that this
behavior is absolutely forbidden, than for your teen to wind up in jail down the road because he never had any consequences for violence at home. An old saying states that if a parent does not properly discipline a child, eventually society will do the disciplining.

SAMPLE CONTRACT

A. Teen will not use any alcohol or drugs.

- **Consequence**: Teen will be grounded for one week. Grounding consists of: staying home, no friends as guests, no phone calls, etc. etc.) Punishment will increase one week for each subsequent offense (i.e., if teen is caught using substances a second time, punishment will be for two weeks, etc.)

  **Note**: It is VERY important to clearly state what being grounded consists of so that there are no avenues for manipulation by the teen to get out of the punishment).

- **Privilege**: Teen will be allowed to continue going out with friends and may have continued use of the car.

B. Teen is expected to return home immediately after school except if prior arrangements are made with parents. Teen will inform parents where he/she is going and will be home by 8:00 p.m. on school nights and 11:00 p.m. on nonschool nights.

- **Consequence**: Teen will be expected to come home twice as early as he was late for one week. (e.g., if 30 minutes late, then curfew will be one hour earlier for the next week).

- **Privilege**: Teen will maintain current curfew and gain trust (some parents may want to allow their teen to work his/her way up to a later curfew by proving himself or herself, but parents should never set a curfew later than the legal curfew in their area).

C. Teen will perform all assigned chores in a satisfactory manner, according to the standards set by parents.

(It is helpful to provide a written list of daily chores so there is no misunderstanding - a dry-erase marker board hung in the kitchen or other family area works great for this purpose).

- **Consequence**: Teen will not be allowed any privileges until required chores are completed, including TV, radio, computer, having friends visit or going out with friends.

- **Privilege**: Teen will maintain access to all privileges of the house, including watching TV, using the computer, having friends visit, and going out with friends.
Home Rules Contract for ____________________________________________

Family

(last name of family)

All family members, whose signatures are present on this document below, are in agreement with and will follow the rules and consequences of this Home Rules Contract as listed:

1. (list rule) ________________________________________________________________

Consequence: ________________________________________________________________

Privilege: ________________________________________________________________

2. (list rule) ________________________________________________________________

Consequence: ________________________________________________________________

Privilege: ________________________________________________________________

3. (list rule) ________________________________________________________________

Consequence: ________________________________________________________________

Privilege: ________________________________________________________________

4. (list rule) ________________________________________________________________

Consequence: ________________________________________________________________

Privilege: ________________________________________________________________

5. (list rule) ________________________________________________________________

Consequence: ________________________________________________________________

Privilege: ________________________________________________________________

Signatures of family members (contract must be signed by all family members involved in contract)