

How to Improve as a Parent

Disclaimer: The following are Dr. Jeff Stott's sermon notes and manuscript. They have not been carefully proofed for spelling or grammar. All Scripture quotes are from the New International Version unless noted.

Turn to Titus 2:4.

Have you ever wanted to be a perfect family? Let's take a look at one. **[show video]**

I'm sure that is exactly how it is at your home, but for the rest of us we need help. In the real world there are no perfect families. But as a parent, how can we help our home be a better place? How can we help our kids grow up with confidence, love, and a Christian worldview?

As a parent God has given you the responsibility of taking care and training up the child or children God has given to you. As they grow older, they will make more and more decisions and they will accept more and more responsibilities but until then it is the parent's responsibility to give them four things that will help them succeed in life.

Give Your Children Compassion

Number one, you need to give your children compassion. You need to love your children unconditionally. Your son or your daughter need to know that you love them for who they are, not what they do or don't do. There needs to be a place where they know they will not be judged for their mistakes or failures. That place is the home.

Titus 2:4 tells the older women to "train the younger women to love their husbands and children" (NIV). Young moms and dads need to be taught how to properly express love to their children. Most parents don't know how to love their children when they are being rebellious. Many parents don't know how to love their children when their baby is screaming in the cart at Walmart. Some parents don't know how to love their children when they are doing good.

One of the reasons God tells parents to love their children is because they need to be loved by their parents. It's a need built into them by God. The need to be loved is a God given desire. Children receive love in three primary ways.

One way is through affection. This is physical touch like hugs, pats on the back, and high fives. Some children like to sit in their parents lap while watching TV. Give them loving affection, God created them to need it.

Another way they receive love is through affirmation. Tell them you love them. They need to hear it. Tell them when you are proud of them and you think they are wonderful. You need to affirm them. I've never heard anyone say, "My parents told me they loved me too much" or "I wish my dad would quit telling me how thankful he is for me." But I have heard people say, "I wish my mom would have told me she loved me more often" or "I wish my dad would have told me when I did a good job." Your kids need and want your affirmation and encouragement, even when they don't act like they want it.

A third way they receive love is through attention. One of the greatest gifts you can give your child is your attention. Children love to have their parents watch them. Why do you think they say, "Watch me daddy" or "Watch me mommy" when they are swimming, climbing a tree, or playing in the living room. God made us that way. We receive love through attention. Attention can be given by watching, spending time with them, giving them a special gift, or serving them. Find a way to give them your loving attention.

Give Your Children Counsel

As a parent you need to give your child compassion and **number two, you need to give your child counsel.** Biblical counsel. They need direction, advice, and wisdom. You need to be a source they can come to for Biblical advice about life issues.

Deuteronomy 6:5 says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (6) These commandments I give you today are to be upon your hearts. (7) Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. (8)

Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. (9) Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (NIV). From this we see four observations for parents.

First, parents are to have a passion for God. You are to “love God with all your heart, soul, and strength.” Mom, do you love God? Dad, do you have a passion for God? If you have not given your heart and soul to God you need to do so. The only way you can be the kind of parent God desires for you to be is by having a deep relationship with Him. God wants to help you be the parent you need to be for your children and that starts with your commitment to God.

Second, parents are to be an example of obedience. According to **verse 6** God’s Word is “to be upon your heart” as a parent. That means it’s important to you and that you are applying it. Over time your children should be able to see that God’s Word is important to you, not because you say it is, but because you live it. They see your life is changing because of what God is doing in your life.

Third, parents are to teach God’s Word. **Verse 7** says, “Impress them [God’s Word] on your children.” To “impress” means to drive home its meaning or to leave an imprint on your children with God’s Word. To “impress” God’s Word on your children means to help your child to have a clear understanding of God’s truths. How do you do that? The rest of verse 7 tells us and it brings us to number four.

Fourth, parents are to create an atmosphere of spiritual truth. What I mean by an atmosphere of spiritual truth is you use whatever comes up good, bad, or ugly to teach your children the truth of God’s Word. **Verse 7** puts it this way, “Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. (8) Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. (9) Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Use the experiences of life to initiate conversations about God and His ways. When your child ask you where do babies come from, tell him what the Bible says. When someone in the family dies and your daughter ask, why did grandpa die? Tell her what the Bible says about life and death. Let God’s Word be a part of your atmosphere.

Give Your Children Correction

As a parent I need to give my child compassion and Biblical counsel, **but a third thing I can do for my child is loving correction**. God's Word clearly tells us, as parents, we are to discipline and correct our children. There are many ways we can fulfill these commands. Some parents ground their children, give restrictions, or add chores around the house. **However, the primary way of Biblical discipline for children is spanking**.

Look at what God says about this.

Proverbs 22:15

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him (NIV).

Proverbs 29:15

"The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother" (NIV).

Proverbs 23:13-14

"Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death" (NIV).

Proverbs 13:24

"He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him" (NIV).

Proverbs 19:18

"Discipline your son in his early years while there is hope. If you don't you will ruin his life" (LB).

Before I go any further, I want to make something very clear. Child abuse is not Biblical discipline. To slap, hit or push a child out of anger and frustration which results in a cut, bruise, or wound is not loving discipline. To yell at the child in order to make them feel bad is not discipline. To lock a child in a closet or send him to bed without food is not Biblical discipline, it is wickedness, foolishness and immaturity on the part of the parent.

Let's learn how to discipline our children in a way that honors God and honors the child. I want to give you four Biblical guidelines for disciplining children.

Number one, Biblical discipline is based on love, not anger. Proverbs 13:24 says, "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him" (NIV). Don't discipline your children simply because you are angry with them or because they are getting on your nerves. Discipline is to be done out of love, not anger, irritation, or frustration. You care about their life and you want what's best for them so you discipline them to help stay away from harmful behaviors. Even when God discipline His children, He does it out of love; not out of anger. Hebrews 12:6 says, "The Lord disciplines those He loves." Be careful that you are not punishing your child, grounding your child, spanking your child just to make you feel better and to appease your own anger at what they did. Discipline is for training the child, not making you feel better.

Number two, Biblical discipline is careful instruction. Proverbs 13:24 says, "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him" (NIV). The idea behind being "careful to discipline him" is being cautious and alert. You pay attention to how the discipline is affecting the child. Which forms of discipline works best for the child. You are careful to explain what he did to be disciplined and why he must be disciplined. If you don't you are going to exasperate your children. Ephesians 6:4 says, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (NIV). Discipline is to be done carefully and with instruction. Make sure your child understands why he is being disciplined. Talk to them about it. Help them to understand.

Number three, Biblical discipline is needed because of the child's nature. Proverbs 22:15 says, “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him” (NIV). Everyone of us is born with a sinful nature. You were born with a bent to sin. You don't have to teach a child to be selfish, but you do have to train a child to be generous. You don't have to teach a child how to lie, but you do have to train them to tell the truth. Biblical discipline and loving punishment helps get rid or prevent foolishness and rebellion later on in life.

Give Your Children Confidence

As a parent I need to give my child tender compassion, Biblical counsel, loving correction, and **number four; I need to give my child confidence. Colossians 3:21** says, “Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged” (NIV). In other words, don't rebuke your children so much that they become discouraged and quit trying. If all you are doing is correcting your child, but not affirming him he will get discouraged. If all you do is tell him how much a problem he is and never tell him how wonderful he is, you are going to discourage him.

The Bible says “do not embitter your children.” To “embitter” means to make bitter. As a parent you can make your child bitter, sour, mean, and resentful. Some of the ways parents embitter their children is by unloving correction and the lack of compassion. When they become embittered, they will become discouraged and quit trying. You don't want that to happen.

Conclusion

Even as you apply all these Biblical principles to your family, you will never be the perfect family, but you can be a better family: a family whose foundation is God, a family who experiences compassion, and a family who knows right from wrong. You are not going to be a perfect family. You are not going to be a perfect parent. Wherever you fail, forget, or mess up as a parent God can intervene for your child. You are not alone in this. Trust God. Do what He says and see what happens.

However, as a parent, you can improve. You can learn how to love your child, support your child, encourage your child and discipline your child in such a way that it builds them up and helps position them to succeed.

But one thing you need to nail down is your relationship with Jesus Christ. [Explain salvation].