

CAN WE WAIT TOO LONG?

By Keith Greer

Whenever the subject of correcting children comes up, many different attitudes and concepts are expressed. Still, I'm convinced God's ways are the best.

Many times parents have expressed the doubts they have of being "too hard" on their children. So called "how to raise your children books", tell us not to discipline the child until they are at least five. What does God say?

"He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly."
(Proverbs 13:24) "Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction."
(Proverbs 19:18)

"Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell." (Proverbs 23:13,14)

"For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them." (1Samuel 3:13)

Please soberly just read these few passages, it becomes quite apparent that God is showing the need for discipline in a child's life. How does one correct behavior which is bad? By giving a guide to follow, and consequences for going beyond that guideline. How did God teach His children?

"And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.'" (Exodus 32:27,28)

Could one dare say that God's correction of behavior was unacceptable and might have been declared too harsh? No, it was just! Why did He do it? Love for them. The willingness to apply the "remedy" displays true love! What if God had permitted it to go on without any consequences? No love would have been displayed, and no lessons would have been learned.

Can a parent wait too long? What happens if we do not get to the root of the problem early? Sadly, the problems become worse and more difficult to handle. Yes, we should be longsuffering and patient, but not for long. By so doing we are actually rewarding the bad behavior. God never did, nor will he ever, reward and allow sin to go unchecked! How can we do less?

How many tears have been cried for "older" children, when the behavior has brought much more grief to the parents, than a few spankings would have while they were small! Remember these few passages:

"Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them": (Ecclesiastes 12:1)

"Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from, it." (Proverbs 22:6)

"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)

Discipline administered with love does work! "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:11) God's wisdom will always work when it is applied in the correct way with love and mercy. Why do men have to learn this truth the hard way? ***