

Handout A: My Views on Parenting

1. How did the important adults in your life view children? Were children, for example, a blessing, a nuisance, blank slates, “little adults” or better seen than heard?
2. How are those views operative in your current understandings? (E.g. do you embrace them, reject them, revert to them in times of stress)?
3. What is your understanding of what the Bible says about children and parenting?
4. In one sentence, describe your understanding of the purpose of parenting in general.
5. In one sentence, describe your understanding of the purpose of Christian parenting.
6. List four qualities you hope your parenting fosters in your children.
7. List several parenting practices you rely on.
8. How well do the practices identified in #4 align with fostering the qualities noted in #6?

On the Nature of Children

- ▶ *Out of all the available options, God chose to enter human history as a child. (Lk 1:16-56, Mt 1:18-25)*
- ▶ *Children are spiritual beings with relationships with God that are independent of adults.*
 - Children are human beings and therefore created in God's image Gen 1:27
 - Children belong first to God (Gen 30:20 and Ps 127:3)
 - Children participate in covenant with God (Ez 10)
 - Children are "theologians," free to question and discuss God,. (Ex 12-13; Jos 4:5-7)
 - Children are ordained to praise God. Ps 8:2)
 - Jesus was recognized and proclaimed by children as the Son of David (Mt 21:15-17)
- ▶ *Children have personal agency, are God's instruments and serve as examples of faith for adults.*
 - A child is identified as the fulfillment of Israel's hope. (Is 11 and 65)
 - The child Samuel was called to be a religious and political leader when adults failed to faithfully serve God. (1 Sam 3)
 - A young slave girl is the instrument of healing for a military commander (2 Kg 22).
 - *The kingdom of God belongs to children (Mt 19:13-15; Mk 10:13-16; and Lk 18:15-17) and they are models for entering the kingdom. (Mt 19:13-15, Mk 10:13-16, and Lk 18:15-17)*
 - Children are models of greatness. (Mt 18: 1-5, Mk 9:33-37, and Lk 9:46-48)
 - When the adults failed, it was a child who listened, trusted Jesus, and provided the means by which Jesus demonstrated his divinity through the miracle of feeding the multitude. (Jn 6:1-15)
- ▶ *God has special concern for children who are often innocent victims of adult choices and circumstances.*
 - Poverty (Dt 10:18, 14:28-29, 15:11)
 - Idolatry (Jer 19:4-5)
 - Ambition (Mt 2:6-18)
 - Famine and war (Lam 2:11-12)

On Relating to Children

Mt 18: 5 (also Mk 9:33-37; and Lk 9:46-48): *And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.*

1 Cor 13: 11 (see also Is 7:15-16; and Jn 9:20-21): *¹¹When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.*

Ephesians 6:1-4: *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

Proverbs 22:6: *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*
 Train up a child in the way he should go. The verb *chanak*, which is translated "train" originally referred to putting something into the mouth to be tasted, as when a caregiver would give softened food to infants. The image here is to give children a taste of faith in our parenting practices as a way to initiate them into the faith as a way of life.

Handout D

Proverbs and Hitting Children

Example of text used to support corporal punishment:

*Do not withhold discipline from your children [Hebrew *na'ar*]; if you beat them with a rod, they will not die.* (Proverbs 23:13)

About Proverbs

- Hebrew uses several terms that are often all translated into English as “child.” These terms refer to different ages, such as just born, swaddled and carried by mother, suckling, suckling and taking soft food, beginning to cling to father, young teen, and one “shook loose.”
- In all but two texts in Proverbs, including the one quoted above, the term being used is *na'ar* (*one shook loose*), which denotes late teenage years or young adulthood. In the other two, the word *ben* is used, which means “son.”
- Proverbs addresses fathers helping grown sons remain true to wisdom in living.

About the Rod:

- Jewish scholars maintain that “the rod of pleasantness is to be preferred to the rod of severity.”
- The word rod in Proverbs is the same one used in the 23rd Psalm, “Your rod and your staff comfort me.”
- The rod and staff were the two implements utilized by shepherds of the day: the staff (crook) was used to help pull sheep up from rocky places; the rod was used to corral sheep—not by prodding or poking, but by directing them along the length of the shaft.
- An injured sheep was “impure,” potentially rendered the flock impure if others touched it.
- To “spare the rod” refers to a parent not disciplining—that is not guiding—the child.

► Unequivocally, Proverbs does not support corporal punishment of children.

Note: The oft cited myth is not only unbiblical (Luke 15:4-6), it is impractical. It was not practiced in Israel and doesn’t seem to have been or currently be practiced elsewhere. The fable violates a fundamental truth about Jesus, the good shepherd who revealed God to be a God of grace. The earliest record of it is in *What Jesus Said*, written by Robert Boyd Munger in 1955 when he claimed to have met a Syrian shepherd who had broken a wayward sheep’s leg so it would learn to follow him and not lead the others astray. It was then repeated and popularized in *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations* by Paul Lee Tan in 1979.

Sources

Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse by Philip Greven, Ph.D. Professor Emeritus, Rutgers University, author of (Random House)

Sparing the Rod: A Torah Perspective on Reward and Punishment in Education by Mr. Meir Munk (Mishor Publishing)

Thy Rod and Thy Staff, They Comfort Me: Christians and the Smacking Controversy by Samuel Martin (New Foundation for Biblical Research, Download for free at <http://whynottrainachild.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Thy-Rod-And-Thy-Staff-They-Comfort-Me-Mar-2013.pdf>)

“What Does Spare the Rod and Spoil the Child Really Mean?” by David Lane, Ph.D. and Donna Lane, Ph.D. (House Church Network Association; <http://www.hcna.us/columns/childabuse.html>)

Handout E

The Effects of Corporal Punishment

Numerous studies have found spanking, defined as an open-handed hit on the behind or extremities *not* to be associated with more immediate or long-term compliance, but consistently linked to negative effects similar those associated with abuse in a degree commensurate with the amount of spanking experienced.

Effects seen in childhood:

- aggressive and anti-social behavior, especially evident two or three years later
- lower self-esteem and negative self-image
- lack of spontaneity, fear of trying new things
- sadomasochistic tendencies as pain becomes associated with love
- cognitive difficulties—poor performance in school, especially on timed activities and IQ tests
- limited problem-solving ability
- higher levels of reactance and desire to engage in prohibited behaviors
- increased defiance in direct correlation with the amount of spanking
- mental health problems

Effects seen in adulthood:

- higher incidence of antisocial behavior
- higher incidence of deviant sexual behavior
- higher incidence of psychological disorders, including:
 - 30% higher incidence of anxiety
 - 50% higher incidence of major depression
 - 127% higher incidence of alcohol abuse or addiction
 - 75% higher incidence of two or more of the above

Additional studies found:

- a direct correlation between physical punishment and criminal behavior (100% of violent offenders at San Quentin and of young offenders having experienced physical punishment by a parent or other authority figure)
- harsh treatment in childhood creating an at-risk population for youthful offenses, substance abuse, and mental health problems (with 95% of young offenders and 92% of high school drop-outs reportedly experiencing moderate to severe physical punishment as children)
- A "dose response" of antisocial behavior correlating to the amount of physical punishment

Physical punishment teaches children that:

- We communicate important things through hitting.
- Hitting is an acceptable response to anger.
- The people they depend on to protect them will hurt them.
- Parents are to be feared, rather than trusted and respected
- Home is an unsafe place.

Sources

- [CDC-Kaiser ACE \[Adverse childhood experiences\] Study](#) (1995 to 1997)
- ["Child Abuse, Depression, and Methylation in Genes Involved With Stress, Neural Plasticity, and Brain Circuitry,"](#) Yale School of Medicine (*Journal of the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry*, April 2014)
- ["The Influence of Corporal Punishment on Crime,"](#) Adah Maurer and James S. Wallerstein (1987)
- [Spanking and Child Outcomes: Old Controversies and New Meta-Analyses,](#) Elizabeth T Gershoff and Andrew Grogan-Kaylor (*Journal of Family Psychology*, Jun 2016)
- ["New Zealand study of adjustment by youths,"](#) D.M. Fergusson and M.T. Lynskey (1997, Department of Psychological Medicine, *Christchurch School of Medicine*)

1. When you become angry, do you ever feel out of control?
2. When you become angry, have you ever said or done anything you regretted later?
3. While angry, have you ever assaulted someone (i.e., grabbed, shoved, slapped, or shaken)?
4. Has an angry reaction ever cost you a relationship or a job?
5. Do feelings of anger often make it difficult to concentrate on work or school?
6. Do you drink alcohol or use other drugs to calm down from anger?
7. Have you ever been arrested or faced legal difficulties as a result of your anger?

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, then you may have difficulty managing anger. If you answered yes to most or all of these questions, then you may have a serious anger management problem and are encouraged to seek out a counselor or therapist.

Some steps for managing anger in parenting:

1. Recognize your triggers. Learn which of your children's behaviors get under your skin and why.
2. Identify your anger style:
 - **Sudden Anger**, which occurs really suddenly and seemingly without warning
 - **Moral Anger**, which happens when someone feels their important values have been violated
 - **Shame-Based Anger**, which usually occurs when you inadequate or fail to do something well
 - **Sneaky Anger** (passive aggression), often expressed by not doing what others want you to do
4. Make a commitment to yourself to step away from the past.
5. Decide what new thoughts or actions you can take instead of getting so angry.
6. Don't be discouraged. Instead practice, practice, practice.

Next Steps in Parenting without Violence

- Commit to spiritual, emotional, social, and intellectual self-care and be gentle with yourself.
- Create a covenant with God related to your parenting goals. Review it daily a spiritual practice.
- Communicate a commitment not to use corporal punishment to yourself, your children, family and friends. Model acceptance of your mistakes. It's important to tell children when it will stop and what they can expect instead (e.g. timeout/time-in). Write down your reasons (your goals and values, the kind of relationship want with your children).
- Shift your perspective. Think of your child's behavior as an opportunity to connect. Consider the emotions and needs they are communicating instead of focusing on their actions.
- Empower yourself with techniques for discipline, communication, nurturing, relationship-building, and emotional intelligence.
- Be proactive rather than reactive. Understanding child developmental stages and knowing what is fair to expect from your child is crucial to keeping your cool By anticipating and reading what your children need, you can plan ahead for appropriate responses.
- Get support. The path of gracious parenting can be isolating because you are challenging centuries of accepted practice. Talk to your partner about parenting goals, find local or virtual support groups of people who share your parenting values.

Handout G

Scenarios

Instructions: *Select one or more scenarios to discuss. For each scenario you select:
Review the developmental issues for that age level.
Identify some feelings that might arise in you.
Identify pertinent developmental issues.
Discuss various ways you might respond to the situation.*

ZERO TO TWO YEARS

1. Your 7 month old has begun crying the same time every night.
2. You 9 month old babbles loudly in public places and situations where people are usually quiet.
3. Your child takes items out of a cupboard, stacks them then knocks them down damaging some.
4. A rainy day and you are late for a pediatrician appointment. Your child refuses to put on a coat.

PRESCHOOLERS

1. You are in the checkout line at the store. Your child is sitting in the cart. He/she grabs a candy bar off the rack. When you take it away, he/she begins to scream and shake the cart.
2. Your child begins to resist going to bed. He/she cries and flails when you try to carry him/her to bed.
3. Your child is playing quietly with favorite toys as you are getting ready for work. When you say it's time to go, the child doesn't stop playing. You say it again and the child still doesn't stop.
4. You are working in the yard. Your child is playing with a ball nearby. Suddenly the ball rolls onto the road and your child runs into the road to get the ball.

EARLY ELEMENTARY

1. Your child has been going to school for 4 months. The teacher sends a note saying he/she can't sit still, talks to other children and takes a long time to finish his/her work. (See Information Sheet #1.)
2. Your child and a friend are playing together. They both want the same toy. Your child hits the friend and takes the toy back. Crying and arguing ensue.
3. You are preparing supper. You're tired. It's late. Your child is under foot insisting on helping.
4. Your child did well in school but now in 3rd grade is sullen and brings home poor grades.

LATER ELEMENTARY/EARLY ADOLESCENCE

1. Your child comes home in a bad mood and responds to your questions in ways that seem rude to you.
2. Your child's friend uses "bad words." One day you hear your child using some of the same language.
3. Your child plays video games a lot. It's hard to get him/her to turn off the games and do homework.
4. Your school is putting together an Odyssey of the mind team. You insisted your child participate in the past but he/she really does not want to again. You want him/her to enhance his/her school record.

ADOLESCENCE

1. Your once adoring child suddenly seems to hate you. He/she doesn't want to spend time with you but spends hours texting and messaging friends. mopes through family meals. When you announce plans for a family gathering to celebrate his/her birthday, he/she just rolls his/her eyes.
2. Your child starts wearing the same tattered jeans every day. He says he wants to get an earring/ she wants to die her hair purple.
3. It's 10:30 p.m. and the curfew you've set is 10:00. This is the 3rd time in a month he/she's been late.
4. You have high hopes your child will attend college but he/she wants to take a year to work instead or go to vocational school to learn motorcycle repair.