

God's Solution

by J. Hampton Keathley III

The sermon emphasizes the importance of biblical principles in parenting and the role of discipline in training children to follow God's ways.

Scripture: Psalm 128:1, Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4, 1 Timothy 3:4

Topics: "Christian Parenting", "Biblical Discipline"

Description

J. Hampton Keathley III preaches about the importance of having a 'training corral' in parenting, drawing parallels from training horses to training children. He emphasizes the need for parents to use biblical principles as the materials to build a nurturing environment for their children, promoting happy obedience and rest. The sermon highlights the biblical teachings on parenting, discipline, and the responsibility parents have in training their children to follow God's ways.

Transcript

The Training Corral

One of my greatest joys as a young man growing up on a small ranch in Texas was riding and training horses to rein so they were always under the control of the rider whether roping calves out of a chute or working cattle in a corral or an open pasture. We loved all our horses, but it was the trained ones that gave the greatest joy and were the most valuable. But to get them trained required a lot of time, love, patience, and work. Most of the training in the early stages took place in a corral because a young horse automatically knew it was under a certain restraint. Getting the horse's attention and controlling it in a corral was much easier for it had no place to go in that confined environment. On the wide open range it was a different story, for there the horse wanted to run or was easily distracted. Once certain controls, however, had been built in through training, it was a very different story. Because of this, we always had a corral that was primarily devoted to training our horses. So what is a corral? It is a place of containment and restraint, but one of the main uses is for the purpose of training.

One horse I trained in just such a corral was a beautiful sorrel quarter horse named Dolly. She would stop on a dime and leave me a nickel change. I could take her anywhere and know she would behave herself. She was so obedient that she made traveling to rodeos or contests a breeze. I was able to keep my cool because I could count on Dolly to obey and do what was asked of her. In fact, people noticed her because of her happy obedience and often remarked about how well trained she was.

Scripture teaches us that parents too should have a training corral for their children, not one made of boards and posts, but one built out of materials derived from the Word of God. These materials consist of biblical precepts and principles of Scripture which, when properly brought together, like the sides of a corral, produce an environment for children that not only fulfill biblical injunctions but promote happy obedience and give parents a great deal of rest and satisfaction. I am reminded of a Proverb which says, "Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul" (NIV). The KJV reads, "Correct your son, and he shall give you rest; yea, he shall give delight unto your soul" (Prov. 29:17).

The Bible, God's inspired and authoritative Word, has a great deal to say about parenting, the home, and children. For a sampling, compare the following:

(1) Psalm 128:1-4 teaches us that children are gifts and rewards from the sovereign hand of God; they are blessings and trusts from God. But Psalm 127:3-5 warns that for this to be a reality, parents must allow the Lord to build the house (the home) which includes the training of our children. If God is allowed to build the house, we must use His materials, tools, and follow His blueprints. We must build His training corral.

(2) Proverbs tells us to train up our children in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6). This means getting children to go in the right direction. But what is the right way or direction and how does a parent do this, especially in our difficult day?

(3) The Bible also teaches that parents are to bring up their children (nourish them) in the discipline (training) and instruction (admonition) of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). God trains children in His ways through the parents. As parents, we are training agents for God.

(4) Fathers, therefore, are to have their children under control with all dignity (1 Tim. 3:4). Why? Because children are born without controls. A good illustration of their lack of control is the need for diapers. Parenthood, therefore, means the right of authority and the responsibility of control over their children according to the standards and values of Scripture, but the goal is to bring the child under God's control through a relationship with Him.

Children are gifts, stewardships, from God and are to be returned to God through the process of biblical discipline or training. Biblical discipline is not arbitrary, but is to be based on the principles derived from the Scripture.

As will be demonstrated in this study, biblical discipline is based on the truths of authority and subordination. God gives this authority to parents, but parents are ultimately accountable to God in both the responsibility for discipline and for the manner and method of discipline. This fact is evident from what we learn in Ephesians 6:4.

Ephesians 6:4 has two words which describe the responsibilities and the methods that are important in the nurture of children. "Discipline" (NASB) or "training" (NIV) is the Greek *paideia* from *pais*, "child." According to the use of this word there are two ideas in biblical discipline: (a) instruction or education and (b) correction or discipline as with the rod or some form of corrective control. This is particularly applicable to the smaller child. "Instruction" is the Greek *nouqesia* from *nous*, "mind" and *tiqhmi*, "to put, place." According to the use of this word, it involves the ideas of reasoning, counsel, warning, and gentle or friendly reproof. It is more appropriate to the child as he gets older when he can have a better understanding of the spiritual and moral issues, particularly as to his or her own behavior and to the nature of the situation.

Young children, say up to ages seven and eight, are often unable to grasp the spiritual concepts in many of the issues they face. At this age, they are more oriented to stimulus-response or the pleasure-pain mechanism. Young children connect right and wrong with the results of their actions more than with the spiritual reasons. As they mature, children grow in personal moral consciousness; they become more personally responsible (able to respond in a thoughtful manner) and, thus, they become more personally accountable for their actions as well.²

² Jack Fennema, *Nurturing Children in the Lord*, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, Phillipsburg, NJ, 1978, p. 126.

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