



Scriptural Clarity In The Midst Of A National Spanking Debate

SEPTEMBER 22, 2014

Americans have historically believed in spanking their children by large margins. This can be attributed to the biblical moorings of our culture. In fact, a decade ago, polls indicated that around 84% of Americans spanked their children. Today, polls indicate that somewhere between 61% to 74% of American parents believe in spanking – still a large majority, but on the decline.

Given the recent national debate about this, I thought it would be helpful for you to gain a clear, biblical perspective/theology on spanking. The Scriptures are pro-spanking and Americans have historically been obedient to their instruction in this regard. As a result, individuals, families and our nation as a whole have greatly prospered from the resulting overall cultural civility.

This week we will investigate what God has to say about a parent **spanking** their child. We will study what Proverbs, as well as the remainder of Scripture teach about this otherwise controversial subject. Read on, my friend! May God grant you His wisdom.

- Robert Aderholt, Alabama*
- Michele Bachmann, Minnesota*
- Spencer Bachus, Alabama*
- Marsha Blackburn, Tennessee*
- Jim Bridenstine, Oklahoma*
- Paul Broun, Georgia*
- John Campbell, California*
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Weekly Bible Study During Session

Immediately Following First Votes Back. Capitol Building Family Room H324
Dinner Served. Spouses Welcome.



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I. INTRODUCTION

It may surprise you that the Bible has a lot to say about spanking. Our precious little ones come into the world created in the image of God, (Genesis, chapter 1) which serves to explain their beauty, affection, eye contact and often warm smiles. Danielle and I now have six grandchildren and are truly blessed! But we have all noticed that in addition to their wonderful presence that there exists within them an inherited sin nature, a predisposition toward disobedience and rebellion due to the Adamic curse of Genesis, chapter three. These two theological truths serve to precisely explain their dual nature.

According, God remedies this by commanding parents to “train up your child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6a). Part of that training, God says, is to use corporal punishment. If your child will not listen to you and continually runs in the street, there is no option for a loving parent than to use the power necessary, invested in them by God, to lovingly curtail such dangerous activity. The parent must arrest the attention of his or her child in such moments of waywardness – and correct their behavior. The parent must decisively win the battle over the wayward will of the child. Otherwise the child learns to control the will of the parents – just the opposite of what God intends! Danielle and I refer to such as child-centered families (and there are plenty of them today!)

We all know that to spank is not an easy thing, especially to do it correctly. It must be done with self-control, in love for the child, with the right motive at all times. Many parents err at this point, spanking out of anger and in a reactionary mode. I must say that I know of folks in our extended family that are masterful at biblical spanking who characterize mature use of this God-given tool. (But I must withhold their names for fear of their being arrested! So culturally misunderstood now is this necessary tool to a healthy individual, family and society). Their children reflect their maturity

for having spanked effectively and consistently. What follows is an outline to help you gain a fuller, overall biblical understanding and application of this wonderful aid for successful parenting.

II. THE CAUSE FOR SPANKING

Jeremiah 17:9 states, “The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” This is a classic summary passage pertaining to the sinful status of mankind. Building upon Genesis 3, Scripture is replete and consistent on the fact that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

In stark contrast to this truth is the worldview of the Humanist parent: they believe children come into this world morally and ethically neutral; all they really need is education and direction – not correction. Further, it is one’s environment that explains their bad behavior. Therein is what needs correction! Accordingly, there’s no need for corrective discipline in a loving home. They think their child is inherently good and attempt to reason with him or her. In reality, however,

NO MATTER HOW PERFECT A CHILD’S ENVIRONMENT IS, THERE NONETHELESS EXISTS A SIN PROBLEM THAT NEEDS ADDRESSING

To illustrate this, study babies before they talk: They struggle against you, for example, during diaper changes or when you instruct him or her not to touch something. They all possess a self-will that defies authority. Have you ever successfully reasoned with an insubordinate two-year old? I haven’t! Left unchecked, defiance will eventually bloom into teenage rebellion. If you fail to correct at a very young age, when will you start to correct: when they are sixteen and have gotten their way for years? Good luck! Most decidedly, a child’s problem is not improper environmental conditioning or a lack of education. It is Proverbs 22:15 that clearly diagnoses the problem and provides the proper remedy....



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Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, the rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

Without authoritative, decisive parental help, the possibilities of a parent raising a **fool** are greatly increased. Remember that Proverbs defines a **fool** as one who refuses to submit to authority or reproof (cf. Ps. 14:1). Herein then is the *cause* or the necessity for needing to spank. Now let's further establish the fact that the Bible is unequivocally pro-spanking....

III. THE CASE FOR SPANKING

In making the case that the Bible is pro-spanking the other classic OT passage (in addition to the previously cited passage, Proverbs 22:15) is Proverbs 13:24. It states....

He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.

The Hebrew word for **rod** *shebet* means "stick" This derivation of the word for **rod** refers to that part of a tree from which the same could be made. In ancient history it became the name of a tribe that carried them. Philologically, the word meant "a tool of discipline." (One would not want to run into the Shebet tribe!) In Psalm 2:9 *shebet* describes the coming Messiah's wielding of a **rod** of iron over opposing nations at the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom (cf. Job 21:9; 37:13; Psa. 45). Further, Proverbs 10:13 as well associates **rod** with the specific use of spanking – and its placement – in corporal punishment (corporal derived from "corpus," meaning "body"). Notice again this clear association....

A rod is for the backside of him who lacks understanding.

Why spanking? This tactile response of the parent to the child provides an immediate correlation of sowing and reaping regarding the foolishness of

rebellion (cf. Gal. 6:7). Merriam-Webster defines corporal punishment as "that which is administered by an adult to the body of a child ranging in severity from a slap to a spanking." I would point out that Solomon is more specific as to what part of the body corporal punishment must only be administered: the **backside** or butt area (10:13). Author Tedd Tripp, in his excellent book, *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, goes even a step further in defining the specifics of spanking. He points out that the **rod** isn't so much the physical object as much as it is *the parent* who spansks in obedience to Scripture. I think that is a good understanding of the biblical concept, versus thinking about if or not a parent should use a spoon or a switch from a tree, etc., that is somewhat beside the point.

The rod is a parent [who] in faith toward God and faithfulness toward his or her children, undertakes the responsibility of careful, timely, measured, and controlled use of physical punishment to underscore the importance of obeying God, thus rescuing the child from continuing in his foolishness until death (p. 104).

In summary, the **rod**, according to the Bible, is God's specific means of dealing with, and is the remedy for, foolishness in the heart of a child. Yes, effective verbal communication is necessary, but speaking often fails without the prior use of spanking: that is to say shepherding your child's heart is often much more effective after the use of spanking when they are more somber and attentive. Notice Psalm 23:4 in this regard, a passage that is not specific to children, but includes adults....

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

The word for **staff** *mishemeth* connote a shepherds hook. God in his love not only disciplines us, but He directs us! Significantly, and to the point, the **rod** is mentioned in this passage before the **staff**. Expansively, both the **rod** and the **staff** in this Psalm are meant by Him to aid not only our biological children, but all of God's children (more will be said about this passage in that regard later in



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the study). Herein then is the *case* for spanking: it is an aid in your child's development (as is God's ongoing discipline in our lives as adults).

Now consider these principles in an internal-America sense: The Legislature creates penalties for those who violate its decrees. Our laws demand submission to them; and punishment follows a lack of submission to the laws of the State. How would the people of America behave if the Legislature removed all penalties for violating its laws? Would simply "talking things through" with law-breakers be more effective than due penalties? No. Anarchy would rule in the streets! In the face of another's overt insubordination, words without enforcement too often prove ineffective.

Consider also this principle in an external-America sense: Does anyone really think NATO can effectively deal with ISIS without doing whatever it takes to first gain their submission? Witness Neville Chamberlain's conversations with Hitler.

**HUMANISTS NEED TO WAKE UP AND
SMELL THE COFFEE THAT WAS
BREWED WAY BACK IN GENESIS,
CHAPTER 3!**

Coming back to spanking a child, and continuing on this point, Solomon states in Proverbs 23:13-14....

Do not hold back discipline from the child, although you strike him with the rod, he will not die. You shall strike him with the rod and rescue his soul from Sheol.

The instrumentality of the **rod**, be it in childrearing or nation building, is the means God has ordained wherein foolishness is exchanged for wisdom and a proper fear of God and His righteousness.

**IT THEREFORE MATTERS LITTLE
WHAT OUR OPINION MIGHT BE
REGARDING SPANKING**

**THE REAL ISSUE IS THIS:
ARE WE AS PARENTS WILLING TO
OBEY GOD AND FOLLOW HIS METHOD
FOR RAISING OUR CHILDREN?**

Who are we to think we know better than our Creator as to how to raise the next generation? Properly understanding our role as parents, we are but stewards of the children He has entrusted to us to raise up to give Him glory and honor! When you think of it this way, we must look to Him for His guidance on how to do that in the way He commanded us to – which is also the way most effective and pleasing to Him. This is the strong, biblical *case* for spanking.

Unfortunately, however, some parents abuse their children under the guise of spanking. Abuse is not God's design nor to His liking. It is sin.

IV. THE CAUTIONS IN SPANKING

Parents (and only the parents of a child) are to spank when there is clear-cut rebellion against authority. Again, it is a measured, careful, timely and controlled act of love toward the child who has for sure willfully and intentionally distanced him or herself by insubordinate actions. The best way to think about this is a rescue mission. All excellent parents understand in their heart that they are on a constant mission to redeem their child from foolishness. Since God has commanded your child to obey you (Eph. 6:1), you are being a disservice to your child when you allow him or her to get away with rebellious behavior. To do so is to undermine your position of headship in the institution of your family. As was stated previously, it is akin to a police force becoming passive on crime, or a nation ignoring the beheading of its citizens by another, or the boss at work or the elder in the church turning their eye away from for-sure intentional, deliberate insubordination. There is no difference in principle. Each respective institution will deteriorate if its leaders fail to act as a loving, authoritative, disciplinarian. But as important as it



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is to be authoritative over rebellion, there are at least four ways in which discipline can be administered incorrectly. Those *cautions* are:

A. SPANKING WITH ANGER

James 1:20 says, “For the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” The biblical injunction to spank does not mean that God gives parents the right to throw a temper tantrum in the process. Spanking should be done in love in order to restore. Ephesians 6:4 echoes this principle....

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Restoration stemming from a motive of the other’s best interests must be the overt stated objective of anyone carrying institutional authority in any and all of God’s ordained institutions. When one finds the necessity of having to evoke discipline, be it the parent to their child, the government to its citizens, the government to another nation(s), the elder to the congregant or even the husband to his wife, the clearly stated objective and motive must not be anger, but unequivocal love and restoration. (It is worth stating that this is why too, the public servants’ stated goal and motive relative to the ISIS threat must be “restoration to civility” versus the oft, angry pronouncements of annihilation – as much as our flesh desires to say that).

B. SPANKING WITH PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

In that the **rod** is specifically for the purpose of correction and discipline, it does not grant one the oblique use of physical force in any institutional context. Such license is found nowhere in this scriptural concept under study. A parent who bullies their child(ren) will certainly lose their spirit and loyalty – and thereby grossly fail to achieve the biblical purpose of corporal punishment: again, which must be restoration and growth. The following Proverbs (1:19; 3:31 and 16:29

respectively) underscore the ill fruits of violent behavior, be it a parent who disciplines abusively or any other pillaging conducted by any other institutional authority....

So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence; it takes away the life of its possessors.

Do not envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways.

A man of violence entices his neighbor and leads him in a way that is not good.

When Proverbs speaks of **violence** it is the Hebrew word *betsa*, meaning, “unjust or dishonest gain, illicit gain, plunder.” When **violence** – a spirit that is easily detected by the one being acted up – is the underlying motive of spanking or discipline in any form, God’s intended results will never be achieved.

The root word for **entice** can also be translated “persuade or lure.” A man of **violence** persuades his child to act the same way. Many of today’s prison inmates suffered at the hands of **violent**, abusive parents or guardians. This fact motivates much of the anti-spanking legislation today. Wisdom and common sense suggests, however, that a society will grow far worse if spanking is banned:

**IF SPANKING IS OUTLAWED IN THE HOME TODAY
OUT OF NECESSITY
THE POLICE FORCE MUST BE INCREASED IN THE COMMUNITY TOMORROW**

From a sheer economical standpoint, familial discipline is much more efficient and effective than state discipline – and someone’s got to do it! Therefore, for the government to prohibit the institution of the family from performing its God-



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ordained purpose is to ferry a much larger workload onto itself. The prison overcrowding crisis of today is nothing compared to what will occur if parents are prohibited from properly correcting aberrant behavior in their children. A wise lawmaker will allow the family to discipline citizens at a young age – as imperfect as that may be – versus taking on the family’s responsibilities.

Furthermore, the institution of commerce is not designed by God to be the curing agent for spanking abuse. To do so is to open a can of worms:

SHOULD THE NFL INVESTIGATE AND BAN ALL ADULTEROUS PLAYERS? HOW ABOUT THOSE WHO ARE LATE ON SPOUSAL SUPPORT PAYMENTS – OR PLAYERS WHO HAVE NEGLECTED TO CARE FOR THEIR PARENTS?

If not, why not? Is Commerce the institution God desires to determine what sins are punishable? How about players who cuss or drink too much? Should they be banned from league play? What moral scruples should be enforced and who should determine that? *Has God ordained the NFL to determine what sins should cost us our job and which ones do not?*

Conversely, God designed the institutions of Marriage, Family and Church to deal with such matters. God designed the institution of Commerce to economize a culture, not moralize it. The NFL is woefully inadequate in its infrastructure to deal justly with such issues.

C. SPANKING WITH FRUSTRATION

Neither is spanking a venue for venting one’s frustrations. Note Proverbs 4:14, ff. v.17 in this regard....

Do not enter the path of the wicked And do not proceed in the way of evil men....

For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

Proverbs 20:1 states, “strong drink is a brawler.” That’s to say drunkenness and violence usually go hand in hand. The abuse of alcohol and the abuse of children are kindred folk. Again, the **rod** requires careful, timely, measured and controlled use – all difficult or impossible for an intoxicated parent. Further states 21:7....

The violence of the wicked will drag them away, because they refuse to act with justice.

Spanking for reasons any other than a child’s intentional, deliberate rebellion will have a pernicious (highly injurious or destructive) effect on his or her development. Keep in mind that if a child is spanked unjustly – out of your frustration rather than in measured response to his or her forsure sin of rebellion – it will cause further separation, as opposed to rescuing, restoration and bonding.

D. SPANKING WITH BAD MOTIVES

From the fruit of a man's mouth he enjoys good, but the desire of the treacherous is violence.

In Proverbs 13:2b above, **treachery** *bagad* carries the idea of an “insecure footing,” the idea of a “lack of trust.” If the child does not trust the reason for or the motives behind the parent’s attempt at discipline – then the spanking will not yield the biblically intended result. Such discipline then is nothing more than an act of **violence** in the one being disciplined and will not endear a child’s heart in any way, shape or form. Such ulterior motives are easily sensed and will only create further distrust, driving the child further away.

In the expansive understanding, we all have experienced to some degree policemen, bosses or



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even elders whose motives were suspect when they attempted to discipline us: We were correct to distance ourselves from their sin. Neither child nor adult wants to submit to the abusive use of power: Likened to David fleeing Saul, that's how a kid feels when a parent disciplines him or her with bad motives. People who seek to discipline another with bad motives should be correctly labeled as **treacherous** individuals – be they parents, police officers, bosses or church leaders.

Anger, using physical violence, acting out of frustration or harboring any bad motives are the *cautions* one must exert whenever manifesting discipline in the form or spanking..

V. THE COMPARISON TO SPANKING

Hebrews 12:5-11 is a wonderful NT passage outlining God's heavenly desire for disciplining His spiritual children – those whom He has chosen but need to be sanctified, rescued if you will, from their besetting sins. This passage explains how He goes about that in His love – and importantly serves to incorporate the previous proverbial instruction on parental discipline: herein the discipline of one's physical children is seen in unison with His heavenly discipline of His spiritual children....

“MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.” It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they

disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Notice this passage says that God **scourges** His children: that is akin to saying he uses the **rod** on His called-out ones. States the Psalmist (I referred to this passage earlier) in perhaps the most well-known Psalm of all, the one that depicts the LORD as our loving shepherd, who passionately cares for us, King David states (23:4)....

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Likened to the Hebrews 12 passage, Psalm 23 is not restricted to, nor in the context of addressing physical children only. The purpose for God commanding us to discipline *our* children and for Him disciplining *His* children, by **scourging**, by the use of the **rod**, has to do with both child and adult believer yielding the fruits of righteousness.

But even more insightful and profound is God's additional perspective and motive as to why He disciplines His own, and expects parents to discipline their own: He is preparing a *spotless* bride – His church – to present to His Son at the future marriage supper of the Lamb (cf. Rev.19:9; 21:1- 2). The point is this:

**GOD IS INTENT ON OUR MATURATION
IN A FALLEN WORLD
AND BOTH IN AN EARTHLY AND
HEAVENLY SENSE
THE ROD OF DISCIPLINE IS HIS
MEANS**

Hebrews 12 and Psalm 23 serve to underscore this truth about how God grows individuals! Again, God intends for righteousness to result in His servant and He uses the **rod** and the **staff** to



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achieve it. These two passages provide a wonderful insight into the mind of God on this matter: Corrective discipline (including corporal punishment) is at the core of His essence; it is part of His nature (cf. 1Cor. 14:21; Phil. 1:6; 2:13; Rev. 12:5). Therefore it must be a core conviction and part of our nature too! Herein is a communicable attribute of God: If God disciplines us, should we not discipline our children – those whom He has entrusted to our care so as to prepare them to eventually glorify Him? It follows that in order to be Christlike, we must discipline our offspring.

VI. THE CONCLUSION OF SPANKING

The following Proverbs illuminate the fabulous results of proper parenting: not only in the child, but the family and the state. Notice each carefully:

A. THE FUTURE OF THE CHILD IS AT STAKE

Not only does the **rod** bring the child skill at living life, in contrast to life-long rebellion toward all forms of authority, but proper use of the **rod** blesses and will bring comfort and delight to the parents! Notice these wonderful truths and principles in Proverb 29:15, 17:

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother. Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; he will also delight your soul.

And Proverbs 22:6 need be mentioned at this point in the outline once again....

Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.

B. THE FUTURE OF THE PARENTS IS AT STAKE

These aforementioned proverbial principles should motivate everyone to be a good parent – because the parents will benefit! Use God’s ordained tools for childrearing and not only will you bless your children, you too will be blessed!

It should be noted at this point that God’s Word does not allow parents to choose whether or not to spank their children as a form of discipline. Spanking a rebellious child is not optional, as was previously seen in Proverbs 23:13-14. Spanking is not a suggestion. Today unfortunately, too many professing Christians, because of a lack of biblical understanding or outright rebellion of their own, assert that spanking or not spanking is a personal choice. It is not. Christians are not at liberty to pick and choose which of God’s commands to follow.

PARENTS....

THINK OF SPANKING THIS WAY: AS HARD AS IT IS FOR YOU TO SPANK YOUR CHILD, HIS OR HER OBEDIENCE TO GOD IN THE FUTURE IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO YOURS IN THE PRESENT

C. THE FUTURE OF THE STATE IS AT STAKE

In the Proverbs just mentioned from chapter 29, verse 16 was intentionally bypassed for the purposes of emphasis herein. Notice what Solomon states to Rehoboam will be the impact on the state from a lack of familial spanking....

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother.

When the wicked increase, transgression increases; but the righteous will see their fall.



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Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; he will also delight your soul.

In context, (and I will take the liberty here to paraphrase), verse 16 finds Solomon instructing his son (who would become the next King of the nation Israel) *on the relationship of the health of a nation to familial spanking!* How's that for the applicability of the Bible for today! In the context of the three passages, he states that when children get their own way in the home, transgressions in society increase. And as a result the reign of those societies is short-lived. And to top it off: verse 16 says that the righteous will understand this relationship of spanking to state well-being. Some of God's choicest servants saw this for what it is in the past:

▶ Noah witnessed the destruction of the old world (Gen. 7:23)

▶ Abraham witnessed the ruin of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:28); and

▶ Israel witnessed the Egyptians' death on the west side of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:30).

The righteous will see their fall as well today – godly leaders have the discernment to know what is best for a nation and can analyze, because of their biblical knowledge, why certain nations come apart at their seams. Hopefully this study has equipped you, a Public Servant in that way. Scripture is replete with this principle: **When the wicked increase, transgressions increase.**

**DETER SPANKING IN THE HOME
TODAY AND FOR SURE EVERYONE
WILL PAY FOR IT TOMORROW
IN A MUCH GREATER WAY**

In that government is called by God to be a form of His restraining grace in a fallen world (1Pet. 2:13) it must empower and encourage – not encroach upon – the family to do its job of wielding the **rod** in the home. It is sheer lunacy on the part of the state to prohibit the use of the **rod**

in the home! Our state's penal system must honor, not undermine, what God has called His other institutions to achieve; if it renders those institutions powerless and ineffective, it will ferry to itself an unmanageable burden within another generation.

The solution to spanking abuse is not to outlaw spanking; it is to continue to outlaw the *abuse* of spanking. Spanking in and of itself, administered properly, is in no way child abuse; to the contrary, administered correctly, spanking is one of God's greatest tools for proper child, family and state development! Amen!