

Discipline Is Disciple(ing) My Child To Christ

By: Sally Hohnberger

To begin we must realize that we **all**, come to disciplining (correcting wrong behavior, thoughts, desires or feelings) from an unbalanced perspective. To a greater or lesser degree, we as parents, are either unbalancing in being too severe, cold, harsh and dictatorial without compassion; or we come from an equally wrong and harmful perspective, which is being so kind and gentle, that we lack decision, firmness and as a result authority.

The too kind mothers, as I have the tendency to be, have an unbalanced love called **sentimentalism**. This kind of love lets the child have his selfish, disobedient way. The mother excuses their wrong behavior, coaxes, and reasons at great lengths with the child, hoping vainly that the child will choose to obey. She sees she has little or no authority and cannot change her child's heart or will through reasoning and talking. Since she has no real control, this mother fears to cross the child's will because of the upheaval that results. So she lets the child express selfish words, play with things he should not play with, or behave loudly and distractively without correction. Often she excuses their behavior. This false love creates a weak, boisterous, undesirable, and selfish child. A child that is not pleasing to parents, friends, society and most important, not pleasing or acceptable to God. When parents accustom their children to indulging their selfish way, they are unfitting them for heaven. This is a terrible evil. Parents must come to see this indulgence of self is harmful and unloving. This method of parental government is without Christ's blessing and seriously misrepresents God's love.

On the other hand, the too severe and dictatorial parent has an unbalanced love called **brutality**. This kind of love

dictates what the child is to do according to the parent's mood, in a cold, militant spirit. The parent's perspective is the only perspective. This parent is often explosive. The least little inconvenience, can set him or her on a rampage of anger and merciless punishment with no hope of compassion, discussion or instruction in right doing. This parent strives to maintain order and obedience with a rod of iron from a forceful, my way perspective. Parenting this way also misrepresents the love of God. It is unbalanced friends. Commonly the children manifest a rebellious or bitter spirit. The child mirrors the parent's angry outbursts. It's seen in physically dominating siblings or play mates. He hasn't been shown how to have love, patience and self-control in difficulties or trials, through a surrender to Jesus. The child is so dominated by the parent that he is broken as an animal into submission and as a result has no will or personality of his own. The child doesn't dare to think for himself. He doesn't know how to show godly love or even have hope to change his or her weaknesses. These children will also grow up unfit for heaven and this type of submission is not pleasing to God.

We must understand that every home must have reasonable rules of conduct and behavior in order to function properly. There must be consequences given consistently when these rules are broken. The parent is the authority to establish these rules, oversee, and give proper motivations or consequences when the rules are broken. The child is not to rule the home, the parents are to be the authority. The child is under obligation to God to surrender to and obey his parents. The parents are to be surrender to God and be led by Him in

the management of their children.

Friends, the **only solution** for us and our children is for each of us to learn "how to," unite vitally with Christ as our Savior. We all need deliverance from our former ways of thinking and disciplining. God wants to bring us each from our unbalanced disciplines, to the right mix of firmness and justice with love and mercy. This can be done **only** as we come to Christ, surrender to be led and instructed by Him as a personal God moment by moment. In Christ we can find His balance in discipline and change our ways. Christ leading me, is the solution. We need to be walking and talking with Christ, amidst our disciplining so He can lead us aright.

We can take comfort for God says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Heb 13:5. We are not supposed to be alone in those corrections, conflicts or trials with our children. God promises us, "I will guide thee continually." Psl 32:8. We must seek His counsel situation by situation. See Acts 9:6. The Holy Spirit will call us to a life of self denial and self control. God wants parents to surrender their over dominant or over indulgent ways. Jesus will subdue these cultivated tendencies and feelings, as we give them to Him. Jesus encourages us in Jer 32:27, "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh, is there anything too hard for me?" I must listen to God's directions for me now, and then cooperate. I must surrender, say no to my former ways of reacting and invite God in to direct me in the proper way. There is true freedom in following Christ.

Such an experience must **first be mine**. As I learn, I can bring my child to Christ, for deliverance from his selfishness and wrong ways too. Through this kind of union, communion, trusting and surrendering to Christ, obedience is possible. The child must be taught to put his will on God's side and ask to be changed from being selfish, just as we were taught. Then he too can be enabled, through his connection with Christ to say "no" to his self and "yes" to God. This is how the child can obey his parents! Don't we want to be able to have our children know "how to" come to Christ, how to lay "self" down? How to cooperate with Christ so they too can let God change their selfish hearts, their wrong dispositions, desires, feelings, thoughts or behavior? Sure we do! As this experience is ours, we can instruct them successfully. See John 17:19.

This is not always an easy thing to do! It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely and not allow one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected. The impossibility lies within our own will. If we will not, if we choose not, if we know not, then we can not overcome. The real difficulties arise from the corruption of an unsanctified heart and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God. It's the attitude of, **"I will not have this Jesus rule over me in all things."** This surrender of self is a necessary, ongoing, daily process. It's a battle that can only be won when I am **decidedly**, under the control of the spirit of God.

Friends, as you can see then, disciplining my child is much more far reaching and involved than merely correcting or pun-

ishing my child for his wrong behavior. True discipline is bringing myself and my child to Christ. It's training him "how to" yield up his will and selfish way, on his knees before God. Now *teaching* is instructing the mind what is right. *Training* is seeing to it that they exercise their will to do what they know is right, which includes motivations and consequences. Training shows them how to get up off their knees and do what they have promised before God. So true discipline brings our child to Christ so that Christ can soften, subdue, and change their hearts, dispositions and wills by divine power and his cooperation in self-control.

Only in this way, through this vital connection and communion with Christ, is my child changed on the inside in mind and heart. Through this process the child experiences the joy and power there is in grace. He experiences mastery over selfishness. He sees that obedience is possible. Through this experience he also learns that "self" serving is not a true lasting happiness and is really a state of abject slavery. He learns by experience that obeying mother, father and God is his greatest joy and happiness. With Christ all this is real and possible.

Lets apply these principles thus far, to a situation to see how this all works practically.

An honest-in-heart, yet indulgent mother, asks her 8 year old son to rinse and stack the dishes, while visiting at a friend's house. The child's selfish will was crossed and he temporarily rinsed the dishes, but soon he put forth a defiant step back, a non-verbal, "No I won't." The mother reasoned, coaxed and tried her best to persuade her child to do this small reasonable task. The boy began crying, acting up, whining and harshly arguing with his mother. His countenance, behavior and words had become most embarrassing. She kindly sat and reasoned with her child for more than 20 minutes, only to the increase of his defiance, tears and outburst of angry, disrespectful words. His evil only increased with this method of correction. Mother here is without Christ.

The friend shared with this distraught mother, the need for firmness, giving consequences, making decision and requiring prompt, cheerful obedience. To be firm and decisive wasn't in her character as yet. Through union and communion with Christ, He could instruct her what to do. Through listening, then surrendering and cooperating to do as Christ led her, she would find the proper balance of firmness and love. Jesus' authority would attend her, so her son would learn to yield his will and obey her as he should. As she learned how to work with Christ in this way He could change her wrong thinking, feelings, emotions and even her cultivated indecisiveness. In this way Jesus could instruct her how to bring her son to Him so he too, could find the power to be changed in heart and mind. Each must willingly surrender to Christ before He could change them.

The following three major principles were shared with the mother before they entered the path of discipline that would be necessary to bring the child to Christ. Discipline is truly disciple (ing) my child to Christ. First there is a **law of the mind** which must be understood: when a desired object is so

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firmly (not harshly) denied as to remove all hope, the mind will soon cease to long for it and will be occupied in other pursuits. (It yields!) But as long as there is any hope of gaining the desired object, an effort will be made to obtain it. At times this may be a super human effort.

The mother and son were arguing and the son was winning. Why? The son was responding under the law of the mind. Self was ruling and reigning. The son's will was firm. He would dominate mother and get his way regardless of how unreasonable it was. When mother wasn't decisive, she did not give a firm authoritative no, he took the position to rule over her. Self will naturally reign and rule unless Christ is willingly given that position of rule. Like gravity, this law of selfishness rules. The apple always falls to the ground unless another law overrides it. The airplane flies because another law subdues the law of gravity. Christ in the heart, is the only law that can override sin and selfishness. "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Rom 6:14. But unaided by Christ self will strengthen and rule the child. Self left alone, will only get stronger and become more determined to have its way. This is why the son became firmer and louder to dominate the mother in a carnal way. The mother was very kind and courteous to his selfish behavior. This was harmfully indulgent without consequences or motivations and as a result her authority was met with mockery and contempt. In her unbalanced approach to discipline, she was without Christ and had no authority over her son. To her misery this was a common occurrence.

The second counsel to the soft, indulgent mothers, is that **even kindness must have its limits**. Authority must be sustained by a firm severity, (this is not harshness), or it will be received by many with mockery and contempt. (Isn't this exactly what happened?) The so-called tenderness, the coaxing and the indulgence, used toward youth by parents and guardians is the worst evil which can come upon them. Firmness, decision, positive requirements, are essential in every family.

Thirdly, prompt consequences, in Christ, must be given. Eccl 8:11 says, "Because sentence (consequences) against an evil (disobedient) work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil (disobey)."

Is this not what was taking place? How would God govern in this situation? Prov 13:24 says, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son." Now the rod simply represents proper consequences given in Christ. It is not necessarily just a spanking of the child. Lev 26:14-29 emphasizes the need for firmness also. God shows we are to expect obedience, and if not given, consequences must come, **because I love you!** True love will not allow my child to be in bondage to "self" serving. True love will not allow my child to be weak, paralytic in self-control, or in bondage to thinking, "I can't". True love will take them to Christ to be changed in heart and disposition, to be strengthened to cooperate with God, that they can have the power over "self" serving. The Christian's life is more than we take it to be. It does not consist in mere gentleness, patience,

meekness and kindliness. These graces are essential but there is need of courage, force, energy and perseverance, the sterner virtues also. It's not love to raise our children to be weak, without self-control, easily discouraged, or lack courage to deny self. Our children need Christ **in** them. They need to experience the hope and spirit that says confidently, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Now both mothers consecrated themselves to God in prayer. They promised to counsel with Him at every step and listen always for His voice of instruction, in order that God could show how to bring this wayward, unhappy, rebellious child to Christ to be changed in heart and life. They leaned upon God for strength, wisdom and guidance at every step. It was a battle, friends! This older child had never fully, unreservedly surrendered himself to his mother when his will was crossed. The child did all he could to resist and rule over the circumstance, just as the law of the mind says, "self" would do unaided. His "self" wanted to reign and rule mother. He became more vile in his words and behavior, to the heart break of his mother. God did not forsake them. He gave instructions, what to say, what to do, when to pray for the child and when to give the consequences for a lack of decision on his part. For not to decide is to decide. Motivation was necessary when he refused to obey and come to Jesus in prayer. Intercessory prayer was often done out loud for the child to have evidence of their love and purpose for his life right now. God worked mightily in the child's mind, to direct the child to yield.

After one and one-half hours of many entreaties, and consequences the child yielded and finally chose to believe the voice of his mother and he chose to believe the voice of Jesus in his conscience and heart. He decidedly put forth effort to ignore those lying thoughts and feelings to the contrary. This is a true surrender! He willingly submitted and prayed a prayer mother led out in. It was a simple prayer of confession, forgiveness, and a commitment to obey and do those dishes or whatever mother asked him to do in its place. He also asked Jesus to take his selfish heart and give him God's clean willing heart. Then in faith, he thanked God for changing his heart and answering his prayer. They observed as his countenance, his body, his voice were softened and subdued by the divine influence, into a sweet submission as he prayed. It was wonderful!

The mother's approach to solve this difficulty with the child's will was very different this time. She knew her request was reasonable. She was firm and unyielding in expecting obedience to her wishes. Yet **in Christ** she was without harshness. No compromise was made with evil (disobedience). Nor did she reason with his unreasonableness, or his passions. She did not yield her will to meet his unreasonable selfish will because of his loud obnoxious behavior. Instead she talked with God and did as He said regarding when and how to give her child external motivation to choose the right instead of the wrong. She stated plainly her request. Come pray to Jesus to be changed. She encouraged him that he must choose to do right, that was best. If he refused to choose, he would receive the consequence of disobedience.

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It was his choice. A firm love in Christ was ready to do battle, whatever it took in time or effort to keep her child from serving sin and selfishness any longer. Mother discovered this was not a battle with flesh and blood alone but with powers and principalities of darkness, and it made her well aware she needed Christ at her side and in her heart to battle against this mighty foe successfully. Her son's spiritual life was at stake here. If she would not do battle in this way, she saw she was leaving Satan have her son without restraint. She saw this new kind of firmness, in Christ, as true love. It was hard for her personality. The results were worth all the hardness of it. God was a good general in this battle.

When the child finally saw that his mother was the authority and would not indulge his selfish way, he submitted to his mother's wishes. But as long as the child felt there was any hope of getting his will and way, a super human effort was made to obtain it. Satan won't let his captives go easily, will he? Satan inspires rebellion. When at last, he was convinced his mother would not yield, he chose, he yielded to heed the voice of God and his mother. He did the chore of his mother's choosing, cheerfully and well. He then experienced that this surrender brought peace to his heart. You see without his choice to surrender to obey, he could not find peace. Why? Because Satan takes control of every mind that is not **decidedly** under the control of the spirit of God. Romans 6:16; Mt 12:43-45. Submission to God (the parent stands in Christ's stead) is restoration to oneself. Through submission to Christ he gained the power of self control. God leads us to surrender. His love will consistently allow us the consequences of our choices. Is it love to allow Satan to have and rule over our children through their feelings and emotions? Friends, do you then see that there can be no peace in our children's hearts, our own hearts, or our homes, while the child's selfish will is left to reign? It must be brought to subjection. He must be introduced to that power outside of himself (Jesus) that can change him on the inside and enable him to do right, and he must submit to that. This surrender of self, we must all learn. This is how our child can be restored, recreated into the very image of God. Then the peace of heaven will reign in our homes.

Parents, this is where we often go astray. We do not insist upon the child obeying his parent's godly wishes. We draw back from the battle and as a result self and Satan strengthens their hold upon our children, binding them deeper in sin. This is the battle each parent must enter into. If we don't restrain our children's selfishness and take them to Christ, we are letting Satan have our children, and it instills chaos in our homes.

After this rigorous encounter, the friend read a story entitled, "The Battle for One Soul" in a book called *Messages to Young People* by Ellen White, pgs 52-3. The boy identified personally with it. How the evil angels pressed the tempted soul, how darkness surrounded that soul, how the strong, good angels longed to help the pursued soul, but they must wait until the tempted one willingly cries out for help from God, because heaven does not force. It is not the work of good angels to control minds against the will of the individual. If he yields to the enemy and makes no effort to resist him, then the angels can do nothing. Jesus will not commission holy angels to free those who make no effort to help them-

selves. But when the pursued soul would call out for help and then cooperate to do right, then the good angels would press through the darkness and the evil angels must give back.

This child, age 8 then shared of his personal awareness of that darkness and how he was also aware that the good angels were there. Jesus himself was a mighty soldier he sensed in his mind. Jesus was often calling him to choose to trust and obey his mother. This boy was afraid, was stubborn to give up his way, but when he finally **chose to trust and yield**, God then gave strength to his submission and hope in his heart. Parents, this experience was remembered by the child as a loving mother caring for him in a very special way. Isn't this **true love?** Bringing our children to Christ to be changed. In most cases, if we disciple our child to Christ in this way, the child will eventually say, "My Mother loves me so much, she won't let me be naughty or unkind, miserable or selfish. She is my **special** friend."

Not all situations will be this difficult parents. Many will be easier with Christ. But for those hard times I encourage you by this illustration to persevere, whatever it takes to bring your child to Christ to surrender himself, do it. God will be with you. He will instruct you personally.

Parents, we will all have to die to self, daily and hourly in order to come from our unbalanced perspectives of disciplining to the perfect blend of justice and mercy, as it is **in Christ**. May we choose to unite with Christ to make this possible so that God may use us, to reach out to our poor children, to show them the way. May we learn to hear God's voice speaking directly to our hearts and minds that He may personally instruct us "how to" surrender ourselves and bring our children to Jesus in order to be changed. Discipline is disciplining my child to Christ!

Power for Living



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