

Speaking to the soul



Discipline

Discipline your children while there is hope. Otherwise you will ruin their lives. Proverbs 19:18

The word 'discipline' has a harsh ring to it, but the writer of the Proverbs is clear that it is absolutely essential for every parent to know how to do it. He saw discipline as the way that parents show love to their children. In Proverbs 22:6 he wrote: "Direct your children on to the right path, and when

they are older, they will not leave it.” His many references to use of “the rod” suggest that, while methods of discipline have changed considerably, the principle holds good. Every child needs to have the security of knowing what the rules are, and someone who will ensure that they are followed.

I remember talking with a friend about his teenage years. His parents allowed him to do whatever he wanted and, at the time, he thought this was great. It stood in marked contrast to those around him who had to follow some very clear rules. My friend was allowed to come back home at any time at night and to drink as much as he wanted. When he started using drugs, his parents didn't raise any great objections. Then slowly it dawned on him that they gave him this much freedom because they didn't care. They didn't love him and this led him into a time of deep depression.

Discipline may not sound attractive, but it is actually the clearest expression of love. The writer to the Hebrews talks about the way that God disciplines us. He writes: “No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening – it's painful! But afterwards there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way” (Hebrews 12:11).

If you are a parent, may God give you great wisdom, gentleness and love as you discipline your children. If you are not, I urge you to pray for those of us who have this awesome responsibility. All of us also need to be ready to receive God's discipline, knowing that he only ever says “no” to us because he loves us and wants us to thrive.

QUESTION

In what ways has God disciplined you?

PRAYER

Loving Father, thank you that you love me so much that you are willing to discipline me. Amen