

Spanking Guidelines

The rod of correction/ spanking is a God given tool for parents to drive out foolishness from the hearts of their children.

- Proverbs 22:15 says, “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.”
- Proverbs 13:24 says, “Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.”
- Proverbs 23:13-14 says, “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with the rod, he will not die. If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.”
- Proverbs 29:15 says, “The rod and reproof gives wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.”

A helpful definition of a spanking: “The rod is a parent, in faith toward God and faithfulness toward his or her children, undertaking 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” (Tedd Tripp, *Shepherding a Child's Heart* pg. 108).

Helpful thoughts for consideration

- Discipline and/or consequences do not change the child, only the gospel changes people (2 Corinthians 5:17). Therefore, biblical discipline (spanking or appropriate cause and effect) should always be viewed as a means to open up the child's ears and heart to listen to biblical instruction, specifically the gospel.
- Ungodly discipline (that is often child abuse) looks back at what the child has done wrong and makes them pay with physical punishment for their failure to comply. Biblical spanking however looks forward to help the child not repeat the same foolishness in the future.
- Proverbs 18:19 says, “A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city . . .” *In other words, our children will not submit to our discipline and learn from it when they have been offended.*
- The certainty of the spanking is more important than the severity. *Therefore, 3 swats per incident is a helpful maximum.*
- Spanking is ineffective for 3 primary reasons: spanking is inconsistent; done in anger; or it didn't hurt.
- It is strongly recommended that a bread board or something similar be used to spank the child rather than your hand for the following reasons: a wooden paddle will not mark the child's bottom; a paddle will provide sufficient pain to get the child's attention while your hand may not; and it forces you to go get the paddle before you actually spank your child.
- Foolish behavior from a child should be addressed by parents with a spanking beginning when it is certain the young child knows they are disobeying, up until around age 13.
 - A child somewhere between 9 – 15 months of age will begin to demonstrate signs that they understand your commands. When you are certain your child understands a command given (after saying “no, don't touch;” she looks at the socket, she looks at you, she looks at the socket, she looks at you and then touches it) and chooses not to obey, he or she is now ready for a spanking.
 - Around age of 13, a parent should no longer use spanking as a form of discipline. *While this statement can't be proven, it does seem in keeping with the wisdom of the book of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs was written by a Jewish author to his son, and a boy becomes a man in the Jewish culture at his Bar Mitzvah at his 13th birthday.*
 - For parents who have spanked their children from a young age, 13 should not be a huge issue. The vast majority of children who have been spanked consistently and lovingly will have long ago not needed spanking.

The foolish behaviors for which a child should receive a Spanking:

- Disobedience – Proverbs 1:7-8 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. Hear my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching.”
- Lying – Proverbs 14:8 says, “The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving.”
- Venting of anger (temper tantrums, hitting, etc.) – Proverbs 14:29 says, “Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.”

A Word of Encouragement - “Love a lot, praise a lot, play a lot, pray a lot, teach a lot, correct using cause and effect, and when you spank do it lovingly, slowly, prayerfully, and thoroughly so you don't have to do it often.”