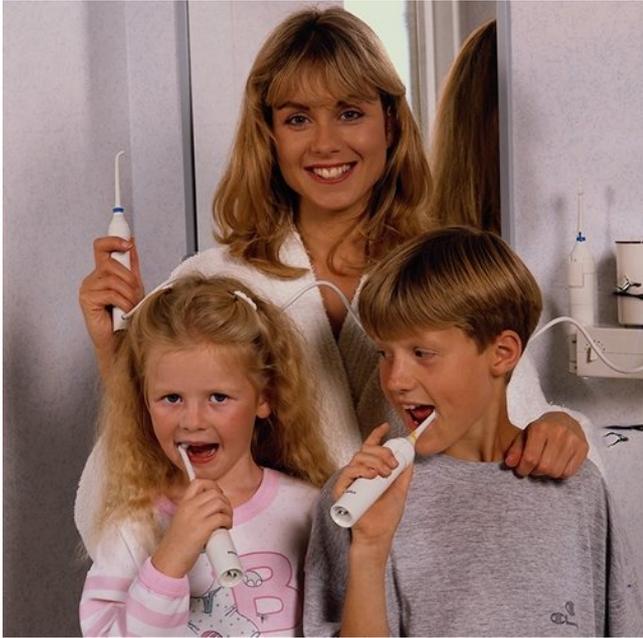


BEGIN DISCIPLINE EARLY



"SOMETHING must be done to stop juvenile crime and the juvenile criminal," is more than a passing remark. It is an alarm!

Sending teen-age boys and girls to prison —even life imprisonment — is causing those who have to deal with the fact to wake up to the need of some radical change in the present training, or lack of it, of our children. Theories have been offered, accepted, and found wanting.

Parents are blamed for the country's present misery and fumbling in the youth situation. No doubt they are largely to blame today, but the original blame can be laid squarely at the door of the so-called educators who have substituted theory, psychology, psychiatry, evolution, and what not, for the teaching of the Word of God. The spirit of rebellion against discipline in

many schools and homes is reflecting the crop that might be expected from such seed — the most numerous and according to the police, the most vicious and defiant crop of young criminals the country has ever known.

Substitutes for God's Way

Any adult can easily recall the process that has been going on for the past twenty-five or more years. Secular education, they said, would make every boy and girl grow up to good and useful maturity; only the "underprivileged" child would be a wayward person or a criminal; the lack of educational opportunities accounted for the criminal tendencies of the young. Acting upon these suggestions, elementary schools, high schools and colleges were increased and made available for practically everyone who wanted to attend them. But there was still crime among the juveniles. What was lacking yet?

Those who thought they knew the answers said that the children needed more recreational opportunities. A busy child, they said, would be a good child. Not practical work, helping in the home or in the shop or wherever help would be needed, but much play, if not all play. The theory was accepted, and playgrounds well equipped with many kinds of apparatus were supplied. Gymnasiums were furnished. Swimming pools were made available. Now they expected to see the criminal or perverse tendencies back up! But they did not. The age of juvenile offenders was lowering steadily. Now what? The next step was "no punishment."

Writing for a family magazine, an author says that some parents and one school of educators and psychologists have come to believe that children ought not to be punished at all: "It is an appealing idea, but unfortunately it just won't work. Living with a child who never has been punished is an ordeal few of us can endure. And what's more, being brought up in that way is likely to be even harder on the youngster in the long run. For no matter how 'progressive' a school he may go to, he'll find someday that his playmates will not let him push them around as his parents and teachers do; and even if they do not punish him, the law will when he is older."

Today the law is forced to send them to the jails and prisons with seasoned criminals.

Early Training

A little wholesome discipline beginning even in babyhood would have saved their young lives for useful and happy citizenship. Some parents think babies are too young to be taught, but soon they are too old to change.

What does God say about juvenile training? "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Proverbs 19:18). How many mothers prevent the father from correcting the child "for his crying"! The wise man said, "Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die" (Proverbs 23:13). And again: "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Proverbs 13:24).

Undisciplined Children

Some of these same educators and psychologists came forward with the theory that children should be given less restraint, perhaps none at all; they should be given the opportunity for self-expression, given their own way, be unhampered by adult ideas. The parents, the teachers, the churches stepped down, and the child stepped up and took control. Today they are telling their parents that they have a right to live their lives in their own way; they are telling their teachers, "You don't dare lay a hand on me no matter what I do"; they are telling the police, "You can't do anything with me; I am under seven."

Today fewer theorists are appearing; they have about run the gamut. Men and women of practical minds and of faith in the Word of God are seeing that the present system of leaving God out of the lives of the children has produced just what one could expect — no fear of God nor of man. It is probably the cause of many of the divorces among the young people — a pampered girl trying to live with a pampered boy.

"Self-expression" — what has the inexperienced child to express except selfishness, a desire to gratify his every wish, a lack of knowledge of cause and effect? He could not be expected to have anything else until the parents teach him, which is not usually very difficult if begun very early in the child's life. A little discipline seems to go a long way then, while severe measures become necessary very soon.

It is said that a child's character is largely formed in the first two years of his life.

Disciplined Children a Joy

Some parents say they do not punish the child because he may not love them if they do. Any teacher knows that a child has far more respect for the teacher who has discipline than for the one who has not. Children know perfectly well when they deserve punishment. And they do not resent it unless the mother makes the father appear like an enemy, or the father takes the child's part against the mother. The Word of God settles that issue: "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Proverbs 29:15). And again we are told: "Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul" (Proverbs 29:17).

Parents' Responsibility

Too many parents themselves have not grown up. A writer for an authoritative monthly comments: "Some say we are still the perennial adolescent. As you listen to our radio, look at our movies, read our best-sellers — and our comics — what do you think of our national maturity? and incidentally, where do you find yourself?"

The Scriptures give a similar picture of many parents, which may be part of the answer for delinquent children. Concerning a wicked king we read: "And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the

way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin" (I Kings 22:52).

One's earnest prayer should be that we may all grow up to responsibility and maturity in the Word of God and in the Lord Jesus Christ who has shown the way to meet every question and problem.

The Bible Way

The answer to every question may be found in the Word of God; and if you will take your children to the Bible, and show them the Word, the Lord will do things that you cannot do. A Christian mother who proved this true said: "When my son saw a young sailor who had his arm tattooed, and he came home and wanted to know if he could have a tattoo mark on his hand, I said, 'We will see what the Bible says.' We turned to the Word of God, where it says, 'Ye shall not . . . print any marks upon you: I am the LORD' (Leviticus 19:28). That settled it with him; from that time he never wanted to be tattooed, because he knew it was wrong." The Word of God will sink into children's hearts in such a way that it will cling to them all through their lives.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deuteronomy 6:6,7).

Parents should nourish their children with the Word of God, and be companions to them, and encourage them. When a child needs punishing, punish him in the right way — but do not provoke the child by nagging and scolding and worrying him. "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

Many parents say, "I can't do anything with my children." That is just simply falling a prey to the spirit of the last days, and it is the compromising in your heart with your children, many times, that is the cause of their having the upper hand. You say, "No, you can't go." The child says, "Oh, please, can't I go?" and teases and teases, and soon you will say, "Yes, you can go." That is all a child needs to know about a parent, that his word does not amount to anything. Do not be hasty about saying No; but when you say it, let your child know that you mean it. God wants His people to see to it that their children obey.

God's Word prescribes the only realistic way by which parents can rightly bring up their children. When the parents are godly, the home is godly, and the juvenile problem will be met as only God can meet it.