

JACK'S CORNER

QUESTION: Is there a place for punishment in Christian parenting?

ANSWER: The problem is not with punishment but with the **MOTIVE** of the parent. Punishment is rarely carried out in a godly way. Often, it is administered out of selfish anger and frustration. The parent has an unloving demand that a behavior changes. God himself uses punishment; the Bible is filled with it. Unlike us, God always punishes out of a holy, just, and perfect motive--his incomprehensible love. **GODLY** punishment is part of loving our children well. Continuous affirmation without consequences for wrong behavior will produce self-absorbed children devoid of conscience. Consider the following points:

1. Punishment should be used as a **last resort** and **sparingly**. Punishment should be an **EVENT** in the life of a child. The punishment should always fit the "crime", so it can have maximum effect.
2. The child must perceive deep **LOVE** as the parent's motivation **BEHIND** the punishment or there will be a power-struggle. All power-struggles are the fault of the parent. The child perceives the love motive in the following ways:
 1. You must have a **CONSISTENT HISTORY** of undoubted love with your child. The child must have enough love experiences with the parent to carry him through the pain of punishment.
 2. The child must be able to **SENSE** your love even as you punish. This happens through the tone of your voice, the look in your eyes, and the way you touch after the punishment.
3. Punishment must always be done in a mood of **SORROW** (not anger or frustration). Children can tell the difference. Punishment done in selfish anger will cause the child to store up animosity and look for ways to take revenge on the parent.
4. Once punishment is over, it is **OVER**. The child must then be restored in his relationship to his parents.
5. Punishment must always be followed by the **OPPORTUNITY OF GRACE**. Reconciliation must be the final goal. Love must never be withheld as punishment.

Biblically, punishment always has a two-fold purpose:

1. **REVELATION:** Punishment is to shock the child into the realization that life is not here just for him...there are consequences for behavior...God is just (as well as merciful) ...people are accountable...the soul deserves condemnation ...the "wages of sin is death!"
2. **RESTORATION:** Punishment should open the heart of a child to the **SURPRISE OF GRACE**. God gives us what we

do not deserve. The heart that is aware of sin is appreciative of the costliness of forgiveness. Punishment opens the door to reconciliation.

As parents punish in a godly way, they are revealing an aspect of the character of God himself...God is not just forgiving; he is also holy and just. The Bible consists of TWO teachings...the Gospel and the Law. Children need both in order to fully understand and appreciate the heart of God.

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