



ACCEPTING DISCIPLINE

God uses discipline from society, family, and others to shape His people.

PROVERBS 29:1-3,12-20

Mention the word *discipline* and people give you all kinds of reactions. To many, discipline connotes drudgery. But few things happen in life that are fruitful and meaningful that do not involve discipline. The athlete, the scientist, the theologian, and the businessman must be disciplined and focused if they are to succeed. In the same way, believers should welcome discipline for the purpose of holiness.

Is discipline essential for the spiritual growth and development of God's people? Explain.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

PROVERBS 24:23–29:27

Apparently, some of the wise sayings of Solomon were collected under the reign of King Hezekiah (Prov. 25:1). Hezekiah ruled Judah from 715-686 BC, over 200 years after the reign of Solomon. He is credited with reviving Judah's spiritual and religious life (see 2 Kings 18:3-7). It has been suggested that Hezekiah used the proverbial wisdom of Solomon as a part of the spiritual renewal of Judah.

Hezekiah's collection of Solomon's proverbs (chaps. 25–29) gives us insights from God's wisdom that enable us to make right decisions. It also provides us with the description of a fool, a sluggard, a busybody, and a liar. A fool is someone who rejects God's wisdom (Prov. 26:1-12). A sluggard is a person who personifies laziness (26:13-16). A busybody is an individual who meddles in the quarrels of others, spreads rumors, and loves to gossip (26:17-22). A liar is portrayed as a phony who will eventually be trapped in the snare that his or her lies have set (26:23-28).

The collection also includes a series of proverbs that shed light on how to deal with difficult people (27:3-4), how to identify and maintain authentic friendships (27:5-10), and the value of discipline (29:15-18). Discipline is the focus of this week's study from the Book of Proverbs.

Read Proverbs 29:1-3, 12-20, noting the contrasts. How do the contrasts help us understand the value of discipline?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

THE GOAL (PROV. 29:1-3)

¹ One who becomes stiff-necked, after many reprimands will be shattered instantly — beyond recovery. ² When the righteous flourish, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, people groan. ³ A man who loves wisdom brings joy to his father, but one who consorts with prostitutes destroys his wealth.

VERSE 1

Solomon began with a solemn warning, alerting God's people that if they developed an attitude of stubbornness and rebellion they would be **shattered**. Just as something brittle can be easily broken, Solomon warned that God's judgment of **stiff-necked** people would be sudden and shattering. Yet God is gracious in that He will give **many reprimands** prior to His judgment. He shows His grace by breaking down our stubbornness through His loving but firm discipline.

When the righteous walk in God's wisdom, everyone benefits.

VERSES 2-3

The outcome for a person who rejects God's wisdom stands in stark contrast to the future for God's people who have placed their trust in Him. Those who walk with God will **flourish** as the Lord works in them. As a result, their families and their communities will **rejoice**. When the righteous walk in God's wisdom, everyone benefits.

Conversely, the individual who lives an undisciplined life and makes foolish choices depletes the family of its resources. That person can expect a heartbreaking fate. Self-indulgence puts people on a path of living that is focused on satisfying their lusts. The expression of lust in verse 3 happens to be prostitutes, but lust takes many forms. Whatever its form, the outcome always takes the shape of destruction.

Too often we view discipline as a penalty rather than a benefit. But when we say *no* to one thing we are saying *yes* to something else. The athlete says no to unhealthy food so he can say yes to finishing a marathon. The farmer says no to prolonged naps at harvest time so he can say yes to ingathering the harvest. Living with discipline puts us in the position to flourish spiritually and relationally.

How does knowing the results of a disciplined lifestyle help a person continue in that lifestyle?



THE AVAILABILITY (PROV. 29:12-14)

¹² If a ruler listens to lies, all his officials will be wicked. ¹³ The poor and the oppressor have this in common: the LORD gives light to the eyes of both. ¹⁴ A king who judges the poor with fairness—his throne will be established forever.

VERSES 12-13

Wisdom (*light*) is available to all people. Biblical theologians speak of general revelation. This is God's revelation of Himself in general through His creation, reason, or other means that are common to all humans. (See Rom. 1:20.) Wisdom is available to the *ruler*, *his officials*, and to all people. There is no excuse for foolish living or leading. Whether or not *the poor and the oppressor* seek and embrace the wisdom of God is quite another thing.

These verses remind us of the influence of leadership. A ruler in the days of Solomon had the power to influence the lives of everyone under his reign. Citizens didn't have a voice in their government. They had no other choice but to submit to their ruler's authority. In such a setting, the integrity of the ruler made a huge difference in whether the people under his authority would be treated well or mistreated. Accordingly, if he listened to godly advice, he would be encouraged to make decisions that would be marked by a commitment to be upright. However, if he brought corrupt advisers into his administration who told him lies, he would be prone to making bad choices.

There is no excuse for operating outside of the wisdom of God.

VERSE 14

As noted above, the ruler has wisdom at his disposal. The picture in verse 14 is of a wise and godly king who uses the light available to him to lead his people in good and positive ways. As one king rejects the wisdom of God in favor of lies (v. 12), another king avails himself of God's wisdom as he makes fair decisions about the poor. Again, Solomon's point was clear—there is no excuse for operating outside of the wisdom of God. To do so will warrant the chastening judgment of God.

How does knowing that God's wisdom is available to all people bring encouragement?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Family*

Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth (Deut. 6:4-9).

THE RESPONSIBILITY (PROV. 29:15-17)

¹⁵ A rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a youth left to himself is a disgrace to his mother. ¹⁶ When the wicked increase, rebellion increases, but the righteous will see their downfall. ¹⁷ Discipline your child, and it will bring you peace of mind and give you delight.

VERSES 15-17

In verses 12-14 Solomon applied God's wisdom to the rulers of nations. In verses 15-17 he addressed parents. Solomon reminded parents of their responsibility to discipline their children. Failing to do so creates a selfish and wicked generation that will be outlived by the righteous.

Gracious but firm discipline may be the most loving posture parents can take toward their children.

Disciplining a child does not warrant abusing a child. The two are not the same. To discipline a child is to find age-appropriate ways, both positive and negative, to correct bad behavior and to reward good behavior. Discipline is nurturing, instructive, corrective, and boundary setting. The apostle Paul wrote to fathers: "don't stir up anger in your children, but bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). Sadly, too many parents raise undisciplined children who bring dishonor to their



families. Gracious but firm discipline may be the most loving posture parents can take toward their children.

PARENTING IN PROVERBS

- Parents give godly instruction to their children (1:8-9; 4:1-4; 6:20-24).
- Parents delight in godly children (17:6; 23:23-25; 29:3,17).
- Parents discipline their children as an expression of love (3:12).

Solomon added that the disciplining of a child is not only good for the child, it gives the parent peace of mind and brings delight to the soul of a parent: *Discipline your child, and it will bring you peace of mind and give you delight.*

This reminds us that discipline benefits both the child and the parent. Parents are responsible to raise their children with loving but firm discipline. The child’s responsibility is to respond to that discipline with respect and obedience. Notice the domino effect of failing to discipline a child: (1) *the wicked increase*, (2) *rebellion* against the law of God then multiplies, which (3) ends in the *downfall* of the wicked. This is true of society as a whole, and it is true in the family where loving discipline is absent.

Children, whether they want to admit it or not, need and want loving discipline. Security is found in discipline. When discipline is lacking a child will run wild. Setting boundaries can be unpleasant for both the parent and the child, but boundaries and discipline are necessary for the maturing of a child into an adult.

How are societal norms a gauge of the type of parenting taking place within that society?

To what level do you agree that the lack of parental discipline of the child is a reflection of the lack of discipline in the parent’s personal life? Explain.

BIBLE SKILL: *Use a compare/contrast chart to study a passage.*

Develop a compare/contrast chart. On one side of a vertical line, write the words and phrases in Proverbs 29:1-3,12-20 that provide instructions for parents about disciplining their children. On the other side, note the words and phrases in Ephesians 6:4 and Colossians 3:21 in which Paul instructed parents on how to bring up their children in the Lord. What insights did you gain from this comparison?

THE SOURCE (PROV. 29:18-20)

¹⁸ Without revelation people run wild, but one who follows divine instruction will be happy. ¹⁹ A servant cannot be disciplined by words; though he understands, he doesn't respond. ²⁰ Do you see someone who speaks too soon? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

VERSES 18-19

Solomon pointed to God's revelation as the standard for discipline. He reminded his readers that words alone do not constitute wisdom, but acting on those words is required. The person who heeds instruction avoids the folly of acting with haste.



Notice the logical progression of thought in these verses. First of all, true wisdom and discipline begin with the **revelation** of God's truth. The revelation of God keeps His people from running wild and enables them to live with joy. The Bible is the true and trustworthy revelation of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is the all-sufficient source of wisdom that reveals the principles by which God judges us. The Word of God is the standard by which all human conduct and opinions should be tried.

Second, God's revealed truth must be put into action. Words alone do not produce wise or disciplined living; obedience does. Faith and trust in God's Word is demonstrated through obedient action, as verse 19 points out. Faith in God's Word is meaningless without obedience to God's Word. Sinners are saved by faith alone in Christ alone, but faith is more than mere words and is never void of actions.

The Word of God is the standard by which all human conduct and opinions should be tried.

VERSE 20

Verse 20 points to an obstacle that prevents us from receiving God's Word. We can't listen to God when we're unable to be quiet. A person who **speaks too soon** is someone who is too hasty when it comes to talking.

When we think about our conversations with God, we're foolish if we don't learn the discipline of being quiet and listening to Him. In fact, we're worse than fools. Foolish people listen, but they listen to the wrong voices. However, they have the potential for listening to God and turning to Him. A person who can't be quiet doesn't have that possibility. **Hope** is squandered by an unwillingness to be quiet long enough to listen.

How does a commitment to God's Word help a person avoid acting in haste?

IN MY CONTEXT

- Believers are to grow in righteousness, learning from any discipline received in the past.
- God’s wisdom is available to all people.
- Parents are to discipline their children, teaching them God’s wisdom.
- God’s Word provides a basis for determining wise action.

What role does discipline play in your development as a believer and in righteousness? Who has God used to help instill that discipline in you? Thank God for the people you identified.

As a group, discuss ways people can disguise and cloak God’s wisdom. What can the group do to help God’s wisdom be revealed and accessible to all people?

Evaluate your commitment to studying God’s Word and applying the wisdom you discover. What actions do you need to take to more fully interact with God’s Word and put what you discover into practice?

Prayer Needs

