

Christian Parenting: Newborn – 3 Years Part II  
Week 4

1. **Introduction**

A baby learns trust at an early age. Each child is unique—having their own personality and temperament. It is important to adjust your parenting efforts to meet the individual needs of each child. Depend on God for your child's well-being and future and for your parenting skills. Spend precious hours and days with your child, bonding together (**Prov. 22:6**).

- **Establish Routines** – A routine will show your child that they can have trust in your taking care of their needs and in turn it helps them take their first step toward respecting authority. Routines build trust. Your toddler will learn to trust you when you put him on a schedule for eating and sleeping. Sometimes schedules for eating and sleeping are criticized as being “parent-centered”, but when looking at it from your baby's perspective the schedule creates stability and builds trust. If your baby knows that they will be fed and put to bed at the same time every day, they won't become distressed before someone feeds him or cranky before someone puts him down for a nap. Your baby learns that they can trust you to meet their needs.
- **Taking Charge** -- Just as every child needs to know someone loves them unconditionally and, no matter what, someone will be there for them, they also need to know there are limits to acceptable behavior. Establishing that you are “in charge” will make bedtime a more enjoyable experience with your toddler. Establish a bedtime routine with them such as reading them a story, giving them plenty of hugs and kisses and praying with them as you tuck them into bed. No matter the routine always end with a prayer.
- **Teach truths** -- Keep God, Church, and Bible as priorities in your home. The Bible is our authority (**Rom. 15:4; II Tim. 3:16-17**). Parents should be responsible and do their best but still know that God is in control and the Bible will be their guide and authority.
- **Model Values** -- Create a Godly home for your family. This can be accomplished through prayer, attitude, speech, love for each other, include children in church activities, communication (**II Tim. 1:5**).

2. **Discipline Not Punishment**

Discipline is defined as “training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character” (Merriam Webster). The goal of discipline is not to punish, but to change a behavior pattern. Discipline comes from the same root word as “disciple”. It will include some unpleasant experiences but it is necessary in order to teach, guide, help, instruct, and train. Discipline is meant to prevent future problems not just solve immediate problems. Good discipline begins with a loving accepting environment. It means listening and responding patiently to your child. Your child is a learner (“disciple”) and they must feel safe within well-defined limits. The Bible prepares us to accept and deal with the less pleasant experiences (**Prov. 22:15; Prov. 23:13-14**).

Children do not know they need information and instruction. As parents, our responsibility is to:

- Teach our children what to do rather than what not to do
- Show them the better way
- Show them how to become better tomorrow than they are today
- Help our children grow, mature, become responsible, respectful members of society
- Teach our children to do good rather than feel good
- Change an undesirable behavior, teach life lessons, or persuade our children to think before they make a decision

3. **Principles for Discipline**

Children should understand what the discipline is for and why it is being imposed. The discipline chosen must not harm your child or create anger within your child (**Eph. 6:4**). Discipline should be:

- Fair
- Consistent
- As closely related to the offense as possible
- Administered by someone who loves the child and is loved by the child

#### 4. **Punishment**

Punishment is defined as “retributive suffering, pain or loss” (Merriam Webster). It crushes, belittles and does not motivate--punishment for the sole purpose of forcing compliance will be ineffective (**Eph. 6:4, Prov. 22:6**). When rules are about maintaining control rather than helping your child learn important life lessons, your child will learn to have little respect for the rules or the rule-maker.

<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Punishment</b>
Leads to change	Leads to little change
Encourages	Discourages
Educates (teaches right from wrong)	Shames
For the child’s benefit	For the parent’s benefit
Comes from love	Comes from fear
Encourages respect	Encourages resentment
Leads to self-discipline	Leads to rebellion

**Eph. 6:4** instructs us to not exasperate our children but instead, to “bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord”. We cannot demand respect from our children--we must command it. A parent will earn respect if they are working on the behalf of their children to help their child reach their full potential.

#### 6. **Preventive Discipline**

Preventive discipline is the establishment of expectations, guidelines and rules through the use of love, consequences, and follow-through. Paul tells us that the goal of our instruction (discipline) is “love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (**I Tim. 1:5**).

- **Discipline from a pure heart** – prepare your heart before the need for discipline (**Ps. 139:23-24**).
- **Discipline from a good conscience** – say what you mean and mean what you say, the fastest way to fail is not to carry through on the demands you have made (**Matt. 5:16**).
- **Discipline from a sincere faith** – let your children know you are not the final authority, but that you answer to God and His principles (**I Cor. 11:3**). Your children will be much more willing to come under your authority when they understand you come under God’s authority. God’s instruction has not changed (**Heb. 13:7-8**). Truth stands the test of time.
- **Discipline through consequences** – distraction, time-out, and loss of privileges. Example: We can train babies and toddlers to avoid danger by diverting their attention when they misbehave. If distraction doesn’t work, physically move your child away from the trouble.
- **Discipline through “natural” consequences** – it’s tempting to rescue when they have to accept the consequences of their own decisions. The best discipline is self-discipline. It’s through mistakes that the greatest lessons are learned.

In our hurriedness and tiredness it is easy let down our guard and to not complete our mission of preventive discipline. Love and consequences will only produce change when we follow through. When a parent has helped their child learn the value of obedience by following through with the consequence the first time the rule or boundary is broken discipline has been successful. Boundaries serve to help protect our children until they are mature enough to establish their own boundaries. Good boundaries build a respectful adult. While we do

not stop being a parent, we will gradually move from “parent/child relationship” to an “adult/adult relationship”. Parents should proactively prepare for that day. Consider these points about following through – no matter the age of your child:

- United you stand; divided you fall
- Be consistent
- Take action
- Use your child’s name, no matter the age
- Decide ahead of time that you will maintain control
- Stay calm
- Don’t be hesitant – your child will hear it in your voice, be confident
- Just say “No”, be firm but loving
- Expect the best – your heart must be in the right place
- Offer a statement, not a question--If you ask a question you’re giving your child the option to decide whether or not to obey
- Do not repeat yourself
- Lower your voice
- Never use “don’t” --Example: “Don’t run in the house” – instead say, “You’re not allowed to run in the house”
- Fit the discipline to the crime
- When you do make mistakes, ask your child’s forgiveness
- Be a parent first, friend second

The reward is a close relationship with our children based on mutual trust and respect. The child’s reward is self-respect. Discipline develops self-discipline in your child – the ability to do the right thing because it is the right thing to do. Through instruction and discipline of moral character, your child develops respect for God, others and self. As King Solomon once said, “The corrections of discipline are the way of life” (**Prov. 6:20-23**).

Spanking: There is a time, very early in life, when a small child doesn’t understand words, ideas, or instruction. Spanking may be the only way to say “your behavior is unacceptable.” When the child is older, other methods will achieve the desired results. Spanking can be an appropriate option with children who are outright defiant or in danger. Do not spank out of anger. Always hug and reassure your child of your love following the spanking.

**Questions for thought:**

1. Why is it important to establish the source of authority early in your child’s life?
2. Discuss the difference between discipline and punishment and how the outcomes from each vary.
3. What is preventive discipline and what are some of the elements of it?
4. Why do you think following through with discipline is so important?