

# Biblical Rules for Spanking Your Children

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*These guidelines are designed for parents that are already convinced that moderate corporal discipline is the Biblical and logical thing to do. If you feel that children should not be spanked ever and at all, **the purpose of these guidelines is not to change your mind.** Please don't waste our collective time with long e-mail dissertations about how it's wrong to "hit" a child and Jesus would never spank children, etc.*

*If you feel spanking is wrong and you never plan to use it, click to go resource that talks about [Behavior Modification](#). Many parents use a combination of corporal punishment and behavior modification to achieve improved behavior in their children.*

**These guidelines are included with the children's section of [Bible Sex Facts](#) because it is likely that persons who read this section will have an interest in proper child rearing techniques. There is no real or implied relationship between sex and spanking your children.**

First, let's look at what the Bible says about spanking in the book of Proverbs:

Proverbs 13:24.

He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.

Proverbs 22:15.

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.

Proverbs 23:13.

Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die.

# Quick Index for Posts to My *Night Watchman* Blog

A culture war rages all around us. I am stationed in a watchtower, on top of the wall, watching the night. If I see danger approaching in any form, from any quarter, I will sound the alarm!

"Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh"... Isaiah 21:11, 12

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**Navigation Tip:** When you click a link below, you will go to my *Night Watchman* blog. You may stay there and scroll through the listed posts. Or, you may use your browser's *Back* button to come back here and click on a specific blog post link:

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[G. Edwin Lint, Th.B., M.A.](#)

## Proverbs 29:15.

The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.

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**The meaning of the Biblical word *rod*.** The use of the word "rod" in Proverbs refers to corporal discipline as described below. Do not assume that you are encouraged to beat your children with a stick! However, do not assume, either, that the meaning of rod is always pastoral, as in *Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me*.

**What Is Corporal Discipline.** The word "corporal" pertains to the body. Therefore, corporal discipline is inflicting temporary discomfort to the body. There are many other forms of discipline which parents may use, such as behavior modification, restrictions, or time out, that do not involve discomfort to the body.

- ❖ **Abuse versus corporal discipline.** Please note that we are talking about temporary discomfort, usually to the buttocks. If your corporal discipline is leaving marks on the body which are still visible after thirty minutes, you may be involved in physical abuse, not corporal discipline. As a general rule, limit your corporal punishment to your bare hand. The use of such traditional instruments of discipline as a belt or a yard stick may make it too easy to cross over from discipline to abuse. Never strike a child in the head or face. The normal target is the buttocks. The implement of discipline is the open palm. Avoid pulling hair, pinching, or shaking. In fact, excessive shaking can cause permanent injury to a small child. This type of injury to the brain and central nervous system is known as *shaken child syndrome*.
- ❖ **Balance physical love and corporal discipline on the basis of a ratio of ten to one.** For every smack, there should be ten hugs, along with prayer and corrective counseling. If this much hugging and counseling becomes impractical, it may be time to look for another form of discipline. By the way, I am opposed to teachers using corporal discipline in school for this very reason. What teacher is going to hug ten times for every smack?
- ❖ **The purpose of any discipline.** The purpose of discipline is to improve behavior, for the safety and long-term well being of the child. In addition, a child who comes to accept discipline from loving parents will be more likely to accept it from a loving God, also.

**Corporal Discipline Limitations.** There are a few No-No's to observe when using corporal discipline:

- ❖ **Never spank while in the heat of anger.** There are two important reasons for this restriction: a) You may be tempted to cross over from discipline to abuse; and b), you may not be in a proper frame of mind to provide sincere hugging and counseling.
- ❖ **Never spank to impress others.** As a general rule, these situation come up when other children and adults are involved. For example, you and your four-year-old are visiting Mrs. Clutter whose house is jam-packed with all kinds of breakable knickknacks. While walking sedately [for a four-year-old] through the living room, Johnny trips over the leg of an end table and the table goes down with a crash of broken glass. You will be tempted to spank Johnny to impress Mrs. Clutter; don't. Counsel Johnny. Offer to make restitution to Mrs. Clutter. But don't spank. This was an accident that you might have made as well.
- ❖ **Never spank because of accidents that could not be prevented even if due care was taken.** These kinds of accidents may occur in your own house as well as Mrs. Clutter's. The kitchen and dining room are likely locations. Spills at the table come to mind.



**Is corporal discipline working?** If it's not, perhaps you should try other techniques. There is a philosophical difference between discipline and punishment. The purpose of discipline is to improve future behavior. The purpose of punishment is to provide a negative reward for past behavior. Try to think in terms of discipline and not punishment.

*To be able to control your children in your home, you must:*

1. **Establish rules and limits.** Your children may act like they don't want limits but many humans thrive in a controlled environment. Make sure they know and understand the rules of the home.
2. **Enforce established rules and limits.** Don't make empty threats. You may say, "The next time you run in the house, you will sit in the time-out chair 2 minutes." But if you say it, make sure you do it. Count on one thing: you will be tested..
3. **Understand and be able to use the basic principles of such behavioral techniques** as contingency contracting, positive reinforcement, behavior shaping, and delayed reinforcement.

## **Behavior Modification**

**Contingency contracting:**

A contingency contract is based on an if/then statement. The classic contingency contract exists between an employer or employees. If you do the things listed in your job description, Then I will give you a pay check or even a bonus..

For younger children, contracts are always verbal. For older children, they may be written. Here are some sample family contingency contracts:

1. IF you will be quiet during family worship, THEN you may have a snack.
2. IF you don't pull puppy's tail, THEN you may take him outside to play.
3. IF you memorize 10 of the 13 original colonies, THEN I will give you a new puzzle.

### **Positive reinforcement:**

This involves the process of rewarding positive behavior while ignoring negative behavior. Of course, you never wait for positive reinforcement when dealing dangerous, or immoral behavior. Use more instant interventions.

### **Behavior shaping:**

Sometimes a child cannot meet your rules and standards. Therefore, you must accept, and reinforce his/her ability to perform/conform on a graduating scale. Use this technique in connection with positive reinforcement. Harry is a new student in the community who has never been to Cub Scouts before. At first, you might reinforce him for not disturbing others while he is out of his seat. Later, you reinforce him for being in his seat even though he is not attending to what you are doing. Over successive sessions, you can gradually increase the requirements for reinforcement until he performs on the same level as the other students.

### **Delayed reinforcement (token economy):**

A token economy is based on delayed reinforcement. Again, the employee/employer relationship provides an example. When an employee comes to work and performs the tasks listed in the job description, the reinforcement comes at the end of the pay period in the form of a pay check or envelope. When working with younger students, instead of using edibles (Fruit Loops) for immediate reinforcement, use tokens for delayed reinforcement. You can make tokens out of small squares of colored construction paper. These tokens may then be exchanged for prizes or privileges.

### **Time out:**

**You will find the need for a time out area where students can go whose negative behavior cannot be tolerated. This may be a corner of the room (a time-honored tradition) or a chair. Keep time out periods short. You might use an egg timer to keep track of the time. You may need different time-out areas for different children. Use the rule of thumb: one minute for each year of age. Of course, in the adult world, the ultimate time out is prison.**

**There must be consistency among all adults in a child's life if behavior modification is to be effective.**

**In order for behavior techniques to be effective, your program must be consistent across all care-giving adults. This includes parents and baby-sitters. Behavioral techniques have less chance of working if all adults involved are not using the same reinforcement procedures. This is especially true for students with serious behavior problems. Involved adults must confer on the various techniques which will be used. These discussions must include things such as: what we use as reinforcers, what is the reinforcement schedule, how shall we word the contingency contract, on and on.**

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