

Spare the Rod, Spoil the Child?

The Christian Ethics of Corporal Punishment



Physical

- Most child physical abuse occurs in the context of punishment -*Lessons in 20 Years of Research*
 - Adrian Peterson
- Brain Chemistry
 - elevated stress hormones
 - spanked vs. non spanked children's threat detection



“My kids are different... they have my blood in them, they have my genes in them”

A Misquoted Phrase

- “Spare the rod, spoil the child” is not found in the Bible
- *Hudibras*, Samuel Butler (1663)
 - mocking religious and political climate at the time
 - Hudibras and mistress affair

*If matrimony and hanging go
By dest'ny, why not whipping too?
What med'cine else can cure the fits
Of lovers when they lose their wits?
Love is a boy by poets stil'd;
Then spare the rod, and spoil the child.*

-Hudibras, 1663

- Christians should not quote this phrase



Proverbs 13:24

Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but those who love them are careful to discipline them.



Interpreting Proverbs

- Proverbs is an Old Testament wisdom literature book
- “The many Proverbs in the book are *not* universal truths, but rather norms of life”

-Grasping God's Word

Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth.

Proverbs 10:4



The Rod in Question

Shebet

- Mentioned 190x in the Bible
 - Tribe/Clan: 140x
 - Rod/Staff: 36x
 - Scepter: 10x
 - Other: 4x



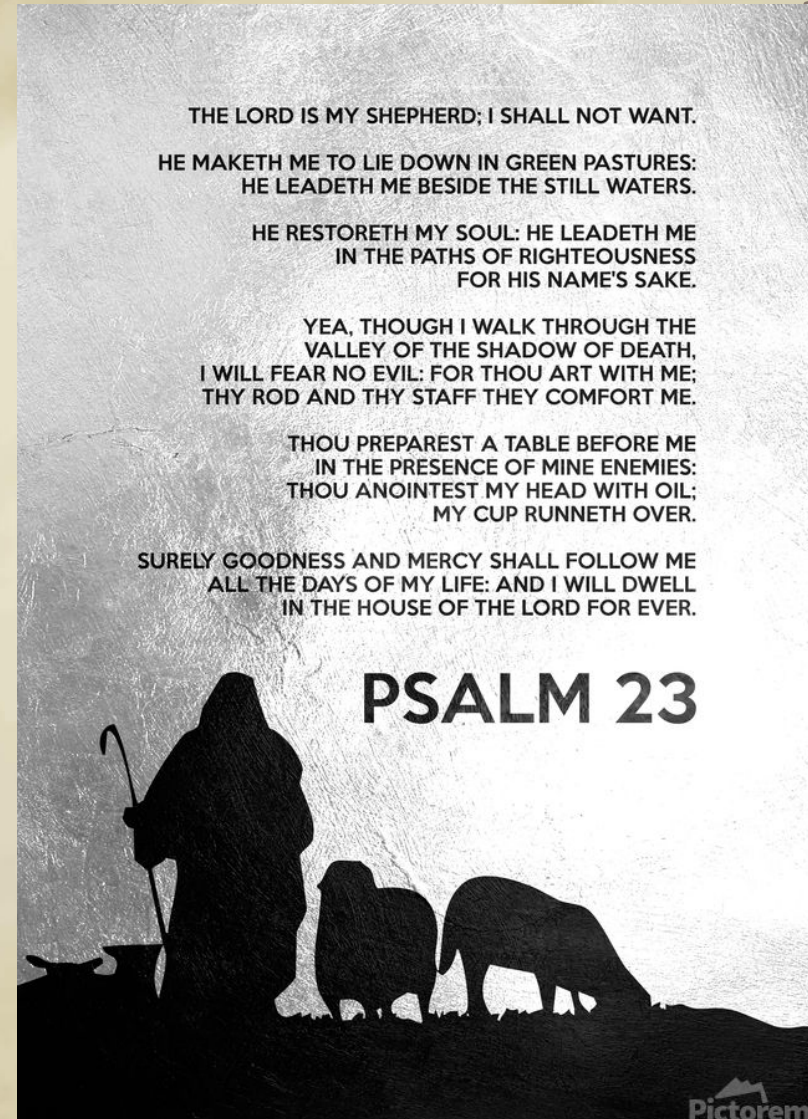
Scepter

- An elaborately adorned rod used by kings
- Proverbs was written by King Solomon
- Symbol of authority: a king's authority over his people mirroring parent's authority over their children



Rod/Staff

- Shepherd Implement
- Used to protect the sheep
- Striking the sheep would incite chaos
- The same root word used in Psalm 23:4– “thy rod and thy staff they comfort me”



A Literal Interpretation



- American Corporal Punishment:
 - A 2014 survey shows that 61% of people agreed with corporal punishment if no implement was used, and 63% agreed if it did not leave a mark
- American Spanking Laws
 - Spanking is legal
 - Texas Attorney General Guidelines for Abuse:
 - 1)striking a child above the waist
 - 2) Using an implement
 - 3) inflicting force that bruises, welts, swells, or needs medicine

A Literal Interpretation

- Biblical Corporal Punishment

-King Solomon's version of corporal punishment is much more severe than even the most vehement supporters are in favor of:

“One cannot accurately say he is following the explicit command to spank when, as we have seen, the foolish teenaged son in the Old Testament was not spanked. He was beaten with a rod or flogged with a whip up to forty lashes. Bruising was quite acceptable and so was injuring him to where he was incapacitated for one or two days. Again, punishment of this sort is not found in connection with young children”


-Dr. Donald Owsley






Theological Principle:

Parents should discipline
their children.





Causing a Little One to Stumble

Matthew 18:6





Mental & Emotional

Aggression

“The results generally indicated a linear positive association between physical punishment and child aggression”- *Moderate spanking: Model or deterrent of children's aggression in the family?*

Academics

“The stress involved in physical punishment might hinder concentration; it also may short-circuit language development and emotional expression”

“Children who have experienced corporal punishment are less likely than other kids to graduate from college.”

-Murray Straus, University of New Hampshire

Mental Health

“Harsh physical punishment in the absence of child maltreatment is associated with mood disorders, anxiety disorders, substance abuse/dependence, and personality disorders in a general population sample”

-*Physical Punishment and Mental Disorders: Results From a Nationally Representative US Sample*

Self Esteem

Among 17 detrimental effects studied, 13 were strongly associated a history of spanking

- Low self-esteem includes higher likelihood of suicide/self harm, substance abuse, & antisocial behavior

-*Spanking and Child Outcomes: Old Controversies and New Meta-Analyses*



Parental Relationships: Dangerous Contradictions

- “Violence solves problems”
- “As your punishment for hitting another child, I will now hit you”
- “I sin and am not hit, but you sin and you will be hit”
- “I hit you because I love you”
- “I am bigger than you, therefore I may hit you”
- “No one may ever touch your private parts, except me when I’m upset with you”



If God commands us
to discipline children,
is spanking an
effective way to do
so?





Short Term Compliance

-Spanking is associated with higher short term compliance

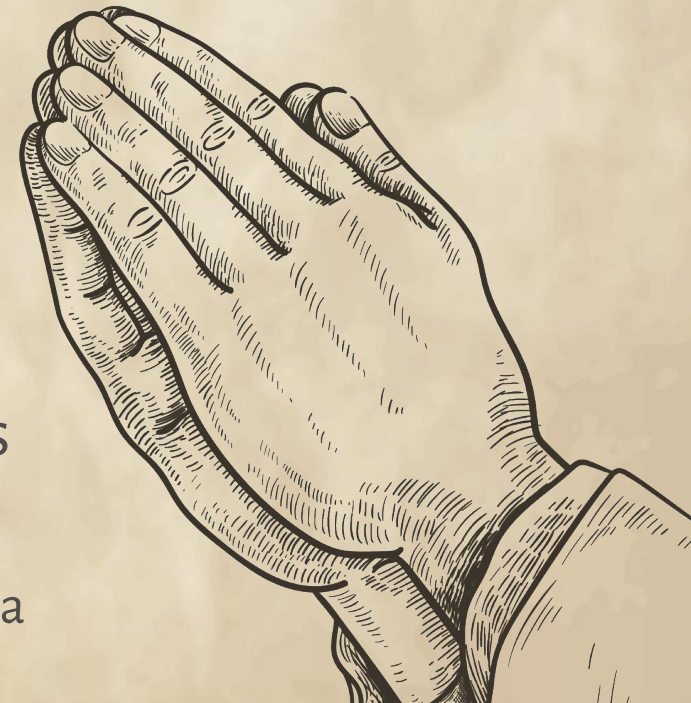
Long-Term Compliance

-Over time, more spanking is associated with less long-term compliance and evidence of conscience

Moral Internalization

-“When parents are away, children are much less likely to make good choices”

-Alternatives to Spanking, Kendra Nenia





If Proverbs 13:24 instructs parents to discipline children and they rely on an ineffective method of discipline, they risk committing the exact disservice to their children that the verse warns of.



- Be slow to anger
- Consider other methods
- Be a good representative of our Heavenly father as an earthly parent
- Raise children who will make good decisions when they outgrow the rod

Thank you!

