

Spanking

by Heath Rogers

California assemblywoman Sally Lieber (Democrat from San Francisco) has recently proposed a law that would prohibit parental spanking of children in California younger than age 4. The state law, though not yet drafted or passed, would make spanking a child age 3 and younger a crime punishable by a fine of \$1,000 and/or jail time. News of this proposal has rekindled public discussion of the subject, with the typical arguments being made on both sides. We will take advantage of this opportunity to look at what the Bible has to say about spanking and disciplining children.

"He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Prov. 13:24).

"Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction" (Prov. 19:18).

"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him" (Prov. 22:15).

"Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell" (Prov. 23:13-14).

"The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother... Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul" (Prov. 29:15, 17).

Consider the following observations made from these Scriptures:

Discipline is done out of love. Prompt discipline is an expression of love, not hatred. What would we do if we saw our child walking towards danger? We would do everything we could to stop him. If one effort failed, we would try another. Spanking is just one of many forms of discipline available to parents who lovingly desire to correct their child.

Discipline is done in the best interest of the child. It is done as a means of removing foolishness from his heart and delivering him from destruction. Discipline should **never** be a means of frustrated parents venting their anger. Although discipline should be administered "promptly," parents would do well to calm down first.

It is best to start administering discipline early. "Chasten your son while there is hope." Some parents can't bring themselves to discipline their young children. However, by the time they get "old enough" to be disciplined, it is too late. Habits have been formed that can not be changed.

There is a difference between spanking and abuse. Those who are critical of spanking claim that it is abusive. The Bible states otherwise. "...If you beat him with a rod, he will not die." Abuse results in emotional trauma, injury and death. There are words in this verse that some find unacceptable ("beat" and "rod"), but the action described in this passage is not abuse. It is the same action described in all of these verses - an action of love in the best interest of a child.

How have we, as a society, fared since parents began to be discouraged to spank their children? Has there been a decrease in things like violent crime, depression and drug addiction, disrespect for authority and human life, etc.? No, there hasn't been. Why do lawmakers think that children, not to mention society as a whole, will benefit by denying parents to right to use spanking as a form of discipline?