

“DID GOD SAY ... ? SATAN’S ATTACK ON CHILDREN.”

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Scripture Texts: Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14; Hebrews 12:5-11

Introduction.

Did God really say? We are considering the lies Satan propagates through our culture, through media, through politicians, through unbelievers, as he carries out his assault on all that God has created and called good. Last week we saw why and how Satan hates babies and his greatest weapon to that end, is abortion.

But Satan’s assault doesn’t stop with babies in the womb, it continues full force after they are born. This morning I want us to be wise to Satan’s attack on children.

Satan’s attack on children.

Why does Satan hate children? For the same reasons he hates babies.

We read one reason last week, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.

Matthew 18:10 See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven.

Satan hates everyone made in the image of God. He hates all God’s children. He hates a godly seed, especially since God made the promise the seed of woman would destroy Satan. He hates fruitfulness and life which children reflect.

He hates the family, the reflection of God the Father and God the Son and the Holy Spirit; the reflection of God from whom all Fatherhood gets its name.

The very first thing Satan attacked was the family, the first family in the garden.

In the culture wars Satan has spread lies about what a family is. He has redefined family from what God says it is to what anyone wants to say it is. Family is no longer one father and one mother and children. Our culture is at war against God and His Word, it’s in full scale rebellion.

How does Satan attack?

All of his attacks on the family are attacks on children. Through divorce, abuse, anger, selfishness, unfaithfulness, family disintegration and family chaos, children are always hurt.

Parenting is spiritual warfare and being a parent means you will be wrestling with demons for the sake of your family and children.

As I watch my own sons become fathers, I see more clearly the real battle they are in. I want to focus on one lie Satan is spreading in our culture. You can tell it is a lie because it contradicts God's Word. Satan says don't spank you children.

Let me give two examples of Satan's anti-God's-Word lies spread through our culture's anti-spanking campaign.

The American Academy of Pediatricians has declared any form of spanking as child abuse.

That venerable magazine of wisdom for the home, *Good Housekeeping* declared:

“Spanking is linked to aggression, antisocial behavior, mental health problems, cognitive difficulties, low self-esteem, and a whole host of other negative outcomes.” (Good Housekeeping, 2016).

Whenever you hear the words “research shows” you should have a healthy skepticism until you know the source and how they conducted their research. The problem with much of the research is that spanking is lumped in with all kinds of abuse. Christian parents who discipline in love are lumped in with child abusers. There is little attempt to differentiate between abuse and loving, legitimate, controlled, age appropriate spanking.

By definition Biblical spanking is not punishment, it is not anger, it is not punitive or vindictive. It is not hitting, beating. It is never an adult temper tantrum. When we do any of those things, it is not Biblical spanking. That's abuse.

How is that a lie, how is that any big deal? This is how you can tell a culture is in full blown rebellion against God when it takes a stand contrary to the wisdom of the creator of the universe.

It's like we are more modern and much wiser now than God.

“Professing to be wise, they became fools ... who exchanged the truth of God for a lie.” (Romans 1:22, 25)

If you tell a lie long enough after a while everyone starts to believe it. This is true whether we are talking about evolution, the existence of God, sexual morality, homosexuality, or spanking.

Our culture has swallowed the lies, hook, line and sinker. When God's ways are cast off, it will not go well for us.

Just ask any educator how it is going in the classroom and in the schools today. You can trace the roots of most problems back to the home and to the lack of Biblical discipline.

Our text in Hebrews 12 has a context. It comes right after Hebrews 11, that chapter often called the great Hall of Fame of Faith, that long list of some of the most faithful men and women in history.

If we would like our children to listed among the faithful in God's Hall of Faith, then we must follow God's method for getting there, the discipline of the Lord. This wisdom is for parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, that none of us get taken in by Satan's lies and that we be able to defend God's Word and do battle for the truth.

Discipline.

Discipline is a road with a ditch on both sides. There are two ways to harm children.

Abuse

There is such a thing as child abuse, and there are people who call what they do spanking, when it really is child abuse. That is wicked, and it is certainly appropriate to object to hitting a child in anger in order to intimidate him into compliance.

Yes, spanking can be too much, too often, too harsh, out of anger, without love and sensitivity to the child. When done poorly, wrongly, it discredits those who do it well.

God's good purposes and good means can be turned into evil. Those who have a temper or anger problems should not spank.

Neglect

The ditch on the other side of the road to discipline is neglect which Proverbs warn about. It is a form of abuse and lack of love to not correct sinful and self-destructive behavior.

Discipline is like the guard rails on a mountain road, it keeps our children from danger, from the cliff. And it keeps us on the road heading the right direction.

Just as a steep mountain road with cliffs and no guard rails is scary and creates insecurity, so a child without discipline is actually insecure, they don't know where the edge is until too late. Discipline gives our children boundaries and direction.

So what does the middle road of godly, Biblical discipline of children look like?

Discipline and punishment are not the same thing, Discipline is not punishment.

Discipline has as its goal, correction. Punishment has as its goal, justice and retribution.

Jesus bore our punishment on the cross so we would not have to face the just and justified wrath of God and the retribution of hell. But God does discipline us because He is our Father and we are His children and we need much correction.

So our role as parents is a God-like role, that is we don't punish our children, we discipline them. If we are hitting our kids out of frustration or impatience or anger it will come across as punishment and will not serve a corrective purpose. And it will not point them to God and to who God is and what He is like and how He relates to us.

Some will argue that gentler means should be used. And if they are just as effective then fine, but when they are not just as effective, God in His infinite wisdom knows this, and He has ordained the means of spanking.

Consider the priest Eli's sons who were scoundrels. They were not corrected with just words which is all Eli used (I Samuel 2:23-25; 3:13).

Spanking is not the only tool, but it needs to be in your toolbox along with words of correction, rebuke, patient instruction and encouragement.

There are tools in your toolbox that you need to throw away. Yelling, screaming, counting to ten, time-outs or grounding.

Why do I say take those out of your toolbox? Because they are not in God's. When God corrects and disciplines us as His children, He doesn't use any of those methods. Our goal as parents is to imitate God, not contradict God.

God doesn't get mad at us and yell at us and swear and throw things. God doesn't send us away from His presence because He is annoyed with us. When we sin, God wants us to come to Him. He stays in fellowship with us. If kids need a break, one parent can go with them.

Three purposes of discipline.

First, to show love for our children.

Proverbs 13:24 Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

Hebrews 12:5-8 "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives." 7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Discipline must be done in love and for the sake of love, and with an end to maintain love. In order for discipline to be loving, it must avoid the twin evils of severity and abuse, and neglect and indulgence.

It is actually cruelty to our children to not discipline. It is to hand them over to sin and Satan. When parents seek to be wiser than God and reject discipline, I guarantee you nothing good will come of it. You can't hate your children and expect good results.

Second, to undo the devils work, to drive out folly and destroy sin.

Sin in a child is not cute, it is not innocent, it is the seed to greater sin. Never wink or smile at it.

A child is never innocent, they are conceived in sin, their hearts are fallen. They must be taught and trained and disciplined and shown the way of obedience, righteousness and self-control.

Part of our job is helping our children see themselves as sinners in need of a Savior.

Proverbs 22:15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

How do you know folly is bound up in the heart of a child?

When a two-year-old declares the end of eating all vegetables.

When a five-year-old single handedly takes on the authority of a parent.

When a ten-year-old thinks video games are more important than homework.

When a child is obsessed with texting friends, or with appearances, or with lying, or with sports.

Baby Blues cartoon of a child making a demand of his mom.

The purpose of discipline is to drive out folly and to increase love and obedience. Our goal is not just to change behavior, but to produce heart change so that when our children are left to themselves, they will walk in wisdom.

Discipline must begin at the first sign of folly, at the first sign of resistance and rebellion. Start while the will is a bendable twig and before it becomes an immovable tree.

The Bible is clear in stating that there is a window of opportunity while they are young, before they are older, and it is much harder to shape their wills.

You should have a goal of being done with spanking by around ten.

Third, to prepare for a harvest of good, godly seed.

Keep your eye on the goal, on a spiritual harvest.

Every farmer knows how this works. There is a lot of work, a lot of sweat, a lot of sacrifice, a lot of long hours, but he doesn't just look at that, he keeps his eye on the goal, a good harvest.

Parents take the time, effort, sacrifice of doing Biblical discipline, not because it's fun, but because we have our eye on the goal. Responsible, self-controlled, mature, godly men and women who know God and His will and His ways and who bear the fruit of righteousness.

Children that learn to obey their parents, have a much easier time learning to obey God.

Proverbs 23:13-14 Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. 14 If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.

Proverbs 29:15, 17 The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. 17 Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.

Hebrews 12:10-11 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

When you discipline, discipline with you eye on the long-term goal. Don't just whack them to get their attention or get them to straighten up and fly right. Discipline them to train them in righteousness, train them to know God, train them to love truth and obedience, train them to hate sin and not hate their father and mother.

Because children matter. Because God loves them, because Satan is out to get them.

Applications, the discipline must feel like discipline.

God has created a special place in our anatomy with nerve endings that can safely receive an attention getting sting, enough to send a message.

It should be painful, but short. Something like a wooden spoon that stings but doesn't damage. Plus having to go and get the spoon slows you down enough to be under control.

Every child is different, and the discipline should be appropriate to their age and temperament. Do it in private, make it clear what they did, and end with prayer and an I love you.

Our discipline must be truthful, consistent, with follow through, not as empty threats, empty words. If we say one thing and do another, we are speaking lies.

Don't take your kids disobedience personally, that way you won't become angry. Don't make it about you, make it about them and their sin.

Don't get into arguments with your kids. You are the adult. Listen, hear them out, then make your decision and that's that.

It must be in love. It must be for the child's benefit and not our own, to make us feel better. Let you discipline always be connected to love, prayer, faith and instruction.

What a blessing are those kinds of parents, lessons painfully learned keep us from far worse transgressions. This is the grace of God.

Parents, we are fighting demons. It is holy work. Don't grow weary in well doing, God is with you and for you. He who is in you is stronger than he who is in the world.