

Parenting and Consequences, Part 3 | secondary consequences

I. Foundational Topics

- The word “discipline” refers to training. (Ephesians 6:4; Hebrews 12) Consequences are a vital part of the teaching, reproof, correcting, and training process.
- God expects parents to give consequences for sin. God *definitely* gives parents Inherent Authority with which He absolutely expects that they will give Secondary Consequences in addition to the Primary Consequences He gives. (Ephesians 6:4; Hebrews 12; Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, 23:13, 29:15)
 - There are those who recognize that far too many people abuse their parental role and dole out punishment instead of consequences. These people don’t believe it’s Christ-honoring to lash out in sinful anger for selfish reasons and call it godly discipline. And those people are right to contradict such behavior.
 - Of course, no, the method of Christian discipline is not to “bring the pain” in petulant, abusive power-plays. But the answer is also not to lie to our children and disobey God by never giving them painful consequences for their sin either.
 - God *absolutely* expects parents to utilize Secondary Consequences in order to teach the Primary Consequences.
- Secondary Consequences are Physical and Relational Consequences given by an authority that are used to point back to the Spiritual Consequences of sin.

II. Practical Secondary Consequences

- **Your discipline must not be punitive.**
 - Too many of us have been lied to or have lied to ourselves about our perceived “right” to punish our kids.
 - “We’re the parents. It’s our home. They’re our kids. God says I have to punish them.” All the excuses we use to justify doing His job in their lives will only ever make things worse.
- **Your discipline must submit to the Primary Consequences.**
 - God has a plan for consequences that is far bigger than the small part we play. Parental discipline is a necessary, but vitally *secondary* part of the picture.
 - Sometimes Secondary Consequences aren’t even necessary because — Lord willing — we’re making it easy for our kids to learn from the Primary Consequences.
- **Your discipline must communicate truth.**
 - We have to stop using punishment motivation and terminology.
 - The consequences our kids receive have nothing to do with daddy or mommy being mad, inconvenienced, frustrated, or the fact that “I can’t take it anymore” or “I’ve had enough” or any of the other selfish, self-worshipping, terrible motivations we communicate when we give consequences.
 - This is not permission to baptize our selfishness in biblical terms. It’s not about using the Bible to bludgeon people. That’s not honest. That’s not being truthful.
 - The Secondary Consequences have to point back to and grow from and be filled with the truths of Scripture — that is the whole point of the consequences — that the children would learn the spiritual lessons God has for them from His Word.
- **Your discipline must communicate love.**
 - The same wrong view they have about God gets thrust into conversations about consequences when they ask questions like, “How could a loving parent ever cause pain in their child’s life?”
 - But when we love our kids, it is clear in everything we say and we do that we are working according to *God’s plan* for our kids.

- Selfish motivations to not use painful consequences and only speak in airy tones because we don't want our kids to not like us (or not feel shame or not be sad) is not loving. It's inherently self-worshipping, and all that flows from self-worship is biblical hatred, not love.
- **Your discipline must unmistakably *point* to the Primary Consequences.**
 - *Talking* about the vital connection between the Physical/Relational Consequences and the Primary Consequences is more important than anything else you can say.
 - You must point back to the spiritual truths *before* the consequences are given, *in the moment* you're giving them, and *throughout* the duration of the consequence if it lasts over a period of hours or days.
- **Your discipline must teach that sin hurts God.**
 - When you discipline your kids, is their biggest takeaway the fact that they have displeased God . . . or made their parents mad?
 - This is not about their biggest takeaway of your *verbal teaching*. This is about their biggest takeaway of actually being sent to their room, or having technology confiscated, or being spanked. When the consequence is happening and when it's done, are your kids able to escape the reality that their sin was first and foremost against God?
- **Your discipline must teach that sin hurts others.**
 - When your kids are doing those extra chores, are they clearly able to see that the extra vacuuming is nothing compared to the fact that they are suffering a breakdown in their relationship with the people in their lives?
- **Your discipline must teach that sin hurts your child.**
 - Believe it or not, this one is even more difficult to teach.
 - We don't want our kids to fear the loss of privileges or the instigation of pain. Only caring about how I'm being affected is selfish thinking. And let's be honest, too often people only care about the Secondary Consequences for the same reasons they *didn't* care about the Primary Consequences.
 - They were so consumed with what they wanted that they didn't care what *God* wanted for their lives. That's why the Primary Consequences weren't even in their minds when they chose to sin. And now because their own comfort is paramount in their lives, they don't want any Secondary Consequences.
 - But that's not really the hurt your kids need to see in their consequences.
 - It's so easy for us to default to pragmatic warning. We say things like, "When you act like that, no one will want to be your friend," "If you keep that up, you'll be fired from every job you'll ever have," and "You're ruining your life; you're going to end up in jail before your 18."
 - And we say things like that because we know that personal pain is sometimes the only motivator. But that's not the job of discipline. It's not about self-preservation. It needs to be about God's best interest in their lives.
 - So, when your child has received their Secondary Consequences, is the third biggest lesson in their mind the fact that they have hurt themselves *spiritually*? Has the teaching and consequence drawn their mind to the spiritual impact of their sin?

How well do your Secondary Consequences achieve these goals? Do they steer clear of punishment because you recognize that God has far more important lessons for them to learn? Does it submit to and support those lessons? Do you communicate it in truth and love? Is the entire experience designed to set the Primary Lessons up in an unmissable way? Does your teaching and the accompanying consequences leave your children undeniably focused on the fact that their sin has hurt their relationship with God, their relationship with others, and themselves . . . but that there is a far better way?