

## Parenting and Consequences, Part 4 | giving secondary consequences

### I. Review

- **A Definition of Secondary Consequences:** Secondary Consequences are Physical and Relational Consequences given by an authority that are used to point back to the Spiritual Consequences of sin.
- **The Theological Foundation of Secondary Consequences:** Secondly Consequences are not punishment. They are a divinely ordained tool that follows the Primary Spiritual Consequences and helps to teach the Primary Spiritual Lessons. This involves speaking God's truth in God's love in such a way that the consequences unmistakably point to the Primary Consequences — specifically that sin hurts our relationship with God, our relationship with others, and ourselves.

### II. All of your discipline must be conversational.

- Matthew 18:15-17; James 5:19-20; Galatians 2:11-21; Ephesians 4:15
- This is known as Targeted Reconciliation. It's not lecturing or haranguing or remonstrating. It's teaching and reproof that will — hopefully — lead to correcting and training.
- A very necessary consequence of sin is that mature believers confront the one in sin. If we know about our children's sin, this Type of Consequence must always be employed one way or another.
- We must speak the truth in love, admonish, rebuke, reprove, correct, teach, discipline, and so many others. And these conversations should be a two-way street with participation from all sides, questions, answers, and discussion.
- Even if the child sinned behind your back, was convicted, came to you to confess and apologize, and wants to repent, you — the parent — are going to need to interact with that. And the content of that conversation needs to be truth in love that helps them be successful in maturing to God's glory. It's all about Targeted Reconciliation.

### III. All of your discipline must be uncomfortable.

- Jeremiah 17:9-10; Galatians 6:8
- Consequences should be according to the deeds. What does sin deserve? Sin reaps corruption. The Greek word translated "corruption" refers to destruction, pain, and death. (Romans 6:23)
- The best way to draw attention to the painful Spiritual Consequences is to utilize painful Physical or Relational Consequences. That's what sin reaps. It reaps pain, it reaps corruption, and — in an eternal sense — it reaps death.
- The verses concerning the rod also speak to the painful necessity of consequences. But — then again — the natural sowing/reaping reality of the world teaches us this too. (Proverbs 1:18; Matthew 26:52)
- People don't learn best by comfort. They learn best by discomfort. Some of the most significant times of spiritual maturity occur in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Suffering and persecution and trials all have amazing ways of refining people.
- Of course, we should never want to merely inflict pain on our kids. It's not about finding pleasure hurting them. That's wicked and violent. No, we simply introduce enough painful stimuli to help focus the child on what really matters.
- But there are so many options for appropriate, Christ-honoring painful discipline. There are so many potential Types, amounts of Taxation, and Time, how are we to know what's right?

#### IV. Your discipline *may* need to be Physical.

- **Physical Pain**
  - Christ-honoring spanking has its place. This is not pinching, smacking, punching, kicking, or the like. Historically, the application of the rod has always been to the softest area and largest muscle of the body. It's not designed to break, cut, or bruise. It's a mild to moderate pain designed to teach that sin hurts.
  - Though spanking is often an appropriate option, it's not the only Physical Consequence we can use. Sometimes it's not even the best Physical Consequence to use. But that doesn't mean that all spanking is wrong.
- **Removing Blessing**
  - Removing Blessings refers to taking something away. It may be a privilege or a possession.
  - Biblical Examples: Adam & Eve, David & Bathsheba (II Samuel 11), the Children of Israel, the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25)
  - Adam, Eve, David, and Bathsheba were all guilty of *taking* something that didn't belong to them. The unfaithful servant didn't use wisely what he was given. Other unfaithful servants abused what they were given. Quite often these consequences work well when a child has abused a possession or relationship or privilege. Removing the abused blessing is very helpful to keep the focus of the consequence on the main thing, and may likely be a very helpful part of learning to use that blessing in a Christ-honoring way in the future.
- **Withholding Blessing**
  - Withholding Blessing refers to not giving something that *would have been* possessed or enjoyed in the future.
  - Biblical Examples: Adam & Eve, Moses (Deuteronomy 32), Ii Thessalonians 3:10; I Corinthians 6:9-10; uke 16:10
  - If the child has shown themselves incapable of glorifying God with their technology (like computers and game systems), then it might be valuable to withhold their access to a future mobile phone.

#### V. Your discipline *may* need to be Relational.

- It's never right to disown our kids, write them off, or give them the silent treatment when they sin. None of that is appropriate. Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21
- **Removing Blessing**
  - Fellowship
    - When we live in sin, we miss out on fellowship with God. The current fellowship is removed, but any future fellowship is also withheld until reconciliation is sought. Praise God that He's ordained a way for us to have that fellowship restored. (I John 1:5-9)
    - Fellowship is an intimate relating that is only possible for reconciled believers.
    - It's only appropriate to limit fellowship when our kids are living in *unrepentant* sin. The moment true reconciliation is sought, fellowship is reinstated.
  - Joy (Proverbs 15:20, 17:21; 28:7; 29:15)
    - It will sometimes be necessary to make it very clear to your child that you are ashamed of them, that their behavior has brought you no joy, but that it has caused you pain and grief. That parental pride and joy may need to be set on the shelf for a time.
    - When it comes to communicating these Relational Consequences, make sure that it starts and ends with God.

### - **Withholding Blessing**

- Noah, Issac with Jacob & Esau, Proverbs 1:27-32
- Sometimes parents shouldn't post their child's bail. Sometimes parents who realize that the child had gotten himself into a very bad situation because he refused to submit to God's wisdom might find value in making the child dig their way out of the proverbial hole in which they've found themselves.
- Withholding Blessing can be valuable when we carefully choose the right consequence to accompany the lesson God and we are trying to teach them.

## **VI. Your discipline must be personal.**

- The best consequences are those that are suited to the individual who sinned. Jonah's plant is a perfect example of this. (Jonah 4:1-11)
- Of course, this is easier said than done. God definitely has an advantage over us when it comes to knowing a person's heart.
- It's so sad to me how many parents assume they know their kids, but they don't. And the only way you will ever truly know anyone is to talk with them. You can go to all of their games, watch all of the newest movies together, you can fish in silence for hours on end, you can attend their recitals and science fairs, but relationship is only ever deepened in communication.
  - You need to ask questions. You need to listen. And, no, you don't need to do this simply so that you can tailor consequences to them. You need to do this to be a Christ-honoring parent.
  - Yes, it will help you tailor consequences, but it will likely also help — more than you can know — to equip your kids to do right in the first place.
  - Now, when it comes specifically to sin, there's a really good question you can ask. "What kind of consequence do you believe will best help you to learn these very important spiritual lessons?"
    - It tests how well the child is understanding the depth of their sin.
    - It helps you better understand how they think about consequences.
    - It may — unfortunately — reveal a manipulative streak in your kids.
    - It can provide an opportunity to illustrate grace.

## **VII. Your discipline must be consistent.**

- When we say one thing and do another, we're lying to our kids, we're modeling inconsistency and hypocrisy, we're setting them up for failure, and we're asking for relational problems. (Numbers 32:23; Ecclesiastes 8:11; Colossians 3:25)
- **Your discipline must be consistent with the child.**
  - A sin can't be bad at one moment and okay the next.
  - If — in the past — the sin deserved losing one's phone, but you don't do it this time because you don't want to deal with the fallout . . . you're protecting yourself while simultaneously not doing what's best for your child.
- **Your discipline must be consistent with all the children.**
  - This is not to say that you have to give each kid the exact same consequences. That would completely go against our last point. But we do need to make sure that we communicate to our kids that the severity of sin doesn't change depending on whose sinning. Sin is sin. And though different children may receive different consequences, the consequence they receive are designed to help that child recognize the very real severity of their sin and change accordingly.

- This is often a hangup with children. They demand equity and fairness. We need to be very careful to consistently discipline our children so that they realize that God and His will are the most important things to us. It's not about inconsistency or favoritism. It's about change the pleases the Lord.
- **Your discipline must be consistent among the parents.**
  - Fathers and mothers should not be in competition. They need to support each other and be a unified parenting team. If mom decided that a child isn't allowed to eat ice cream for a week, dad shouldn't waive that consequence because he wanted to take the kid out for ice cream until mom's edict ruined his plans.

## VII. Mercy and Grace in Discipline

- Times where you may be able to legitimately pass on Physical and/or Relational Secondary Consequences:
  - **The child doesn't know that what they did or said was sinful.**
  - **It was the child's first offense.**
  - **The child has clearly seen the Primary Consequences of their sin, and they have learned the lesson God has for them.**
  - **It was the child's first offense in a long time.**
  - **You're using this as a calculated moment to show mercy and grace.**
    - **We should never give or not give consequences for selfish reasons.**
      - This includes fear, laziness, anger, manipulation, and the like.
    - **It is appropriate to show grace and mercy.**
      - However, *all* consequences for sin that don't involve death in hell are better than we deserve. Can we be clearheaded and theological enough to recognize that?
      - Therefore, all consequences are better than we deserve. And — though this is not an excuse for sin — God is still merciful and gracious when people sin against us by giving us heavy-handed consequences.
      - But even if we set that idea aside and only think of mercy and grace in the strictest sense as not giving Secondary Consequence, our choice to not give those consequences needs to be grounded on biblical truth and a correct understanding of our child and the situation.
  - **When we do show *additional* grace and mercy by not giving Secondary Consequences, we need to be careful to communicate to our children what we're doing.**
    - Too many parents who claim they're being gracious by ignoring sin and not giving consequences (or simply lecturing the child without giving consequences) assumes the child recognizes and appreciates the grace they're receiving.
    - But — generally speaking — since the parent never actually explained the purpose behind their actions, the child is left to interpret the lack of consequences however makes sense to them.
    - And the three most prevalent interpretations among children when they don't receive consequences for sin is:
      - They got away with it.
      - Dad and mom don't care.
      - It wasn't bad enough to warrant consequences.
    - Unless you specifically talk about mercy and grace, your kids aren't interpreting your lack of consequences that way.