

**DISCIPLINE  
IN THE  
EARLY YEARS**

The primary purpose of discipline is to consistently direct your child toward right relationship with God and others through intentional instruction.

### **ESTABLISH YOUR AUTHORITY**

God has delegated oversight of your child's welfare and development to you, placing you in a position of authority over them. Starting when children are very young, parents need to model clarity and consistency. Unclear rules and sporadic reinforcement breed insecurity. You must say what you mean, mean what you say and act upon it consistently by both parents.

### **DISCIPLINE RATHER THAN PUNISH**

Punishment focuses on the negative, while discipline focuses on the positive, directing kids towards a better future. Many parents ask about the use of spanking to help shape a child's will. The scriptures teach that "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him." (Proverbs 22:15, 13:24 and 29:15). Spanking apart from biblical principles, however, can cause more harm than good. Several books, some listed below, can help you learn to apply spanking, time-out and other methods of discipline in healthy and productive ways. The scriptures instruct parents not to "exasperate" or "embitter" their children (Colossians 3:21). It is important to not treat childish immaturity the same as willful defiance. Parents should never discipline children out of embarrassment, frustration or in anger. Accidentally spilling the milk or waking the baby is not an occasion for stern discipline. But ignoring direct disobedience can lead to an ongoing spirit of rebellion.

### **LOVINGLY INSTRUCT**

Don't make the mistake of allowing your desire for changed behavior to replace your desire for a changed heart. Use simple probing questions and share specific scriptures about wrong choices to instruct your child toward repentance. Loving instruction after discipline helps train your child to think like a follower of Christ rather than merely behave to avoid punishment.

### **EASTVIEW NEXT STEPS**

- Spiritual Parenting Class – offered annually; Check our Enews or contact Val Burcham at [vburcham@eastview.church](mailto:vburcham@eastview.church) for more information

### **RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:**

- Jason Smith, Family Pastor – [jsmith@eastview.church](mailto:jsmith@eastview.church)
- **Shepherding a Child's Heart** by Tedd Tripp
- **Boundaries With Kids** by Dr. Henry Cloud & Dr. John Townsend
- **Don't Make Me Count to Three** by Ginger Plowman
- **The Strong-Willed Child & Bringing Up Boys & Bringing Up Girls** by Dr. James Dobson
- Parenting: The Early Years video series – RightNowMedia