



Discipline...

The word discipline comes from the latin word discipulus, which means disciple, someone who receives a teaching from another. Parents usually try to discipline their children to make them people of good, character and order. We want to remind you this time that discipline has the purpose of educating, forming and guiding. Discipline and punishment are not necessarily the same.

Our children learn mostly from what they see, that which is modeled by the authority and caregiving figures in their lives. From the way we communicate, the gestures we use, our reactions, the tone of our voice, etc. Many times we have the intention of using our words to model their behaviors, but what they really end up imitating is our behavior. This is why it's important to be mindful of our attitudes, answers, weaknesses and areas where we need to work on, and let the Lord work in us because sometimes the message we want to send is not always congruent with what we're reflecting.

It is important that when it comes to correcting, we do it with an attitude towards the behavior and not the person. We shouldn't say, "you're disobedient", "rude", "disrespectful", "messy", "lazy", etc., we should say instead: "that was disrespectful, try again with respect", "your room is messy", etc.

Let's remember that their self-image is very fragmented and hurt. No matter how long they've been living with you or their legal status, it's still in their minds, whether consciously or unconsciously, that they were abandoned, abused or rejected, and that they're not your blood children, that's why every time you punish them or correct them they are confronted with: "I'm unworthy", "I'm evil", "I'm useless", "I never get it right", "It's all my fault", "they're leaving me", etc. Even if they don't say it with their words, they can express it with their behavior later, whether it's by isolating themselves, acting out, avoiding eye contact, giving you the silence treatment, or even to the point of self-mutilation. That's why it's crucial that you remind them, after every corrective measure, that you love them, that they're special and valued. Reinforce their identity and value and be specific about the behavior you're trying to change.

It should be our goal after every correction, no matter how many times you have to do it, that:

- 1- there's a change in the behavior,
- 2- the child feels connected to the adult, seeing him as an ally not the enemy,
- 3- the child feels content in the relationship and loved by the one correcting him.

Giving them options at the time of disciplining helps putting the emphasis off of what they cannot do, and on what they can do. Sharing power with your children helps them develop skills of decision making and strategies for life.

When we yell at them and send them to their room, it reinforces their past hurts of abuse and abandonment, and causes a disconnection in the relationship. Staying nearby while they calm down and reflect on their behavior before talking again helps maintain the connection.

Time-in says: come, I will help you do it the right way; Time out says: go and don't come until you get it right.

The IDEAL response

I: immediate - that's why it's important to stay close, to act in the moment. Children learn best when corrected within 30 seconds, that way they associate it with the new behavior.

D: direct - keep your words simple, keep eye contact and if possible use a gentle touch.

E: efficient - that it's congruent with the behavior, if it's a small let the consequence be small.

A: action-based - "try again with respect", giving them a chance to re do builds a relationship where you both learn together and gives them the opportunity for success.

L: leveled to the behavior not the child. (We'll talk more about this in the next newsletter)

Where in the Word?

We see throughout Jesus' life that He taught in relationship with people in his life, there was a connection with them. He taught with His words and His example. At times of rebuking, we can see in the example of the woman caught in adultery, Jesus does not condemn her, reject her or insult her, he tells her "go and sin no more" (Jn 8:11), focusing on her behavior and not her identity.

We can also see God's example by sending His own Son to die for us, because of His great love, to restore the relationship with humanity and himself (Jn 3:16). He did it first, and from there he gives us the example of loving until the end, sacrificially, our brothers and sisters, our friends and also our enemies (Lk 6:27). And there may be times when we feel our children are like our enemies for the amount of stress, rejection and difficulties we go through with them. But even still, as we follow Jesus' example, that He loved until the end and still does unconditionally, with His help and guidelines, we can have our strength be renewed to keep loving and showing truth to the children God has brought into our lives.

"Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid.

Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked..." Luke 6:35.

It is not easy, and nowhere we are promised that it would be easy, but one thing He did

promise through Jesus, that He would be with us until the end of time, as we made disciples (Mt 28:19-20), just what you're doing in your own home.

We pray God continues to guide, heal and encourage you in this race that He has prepared for you and may your faith be strengthened and be filled with His joy and peace.

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