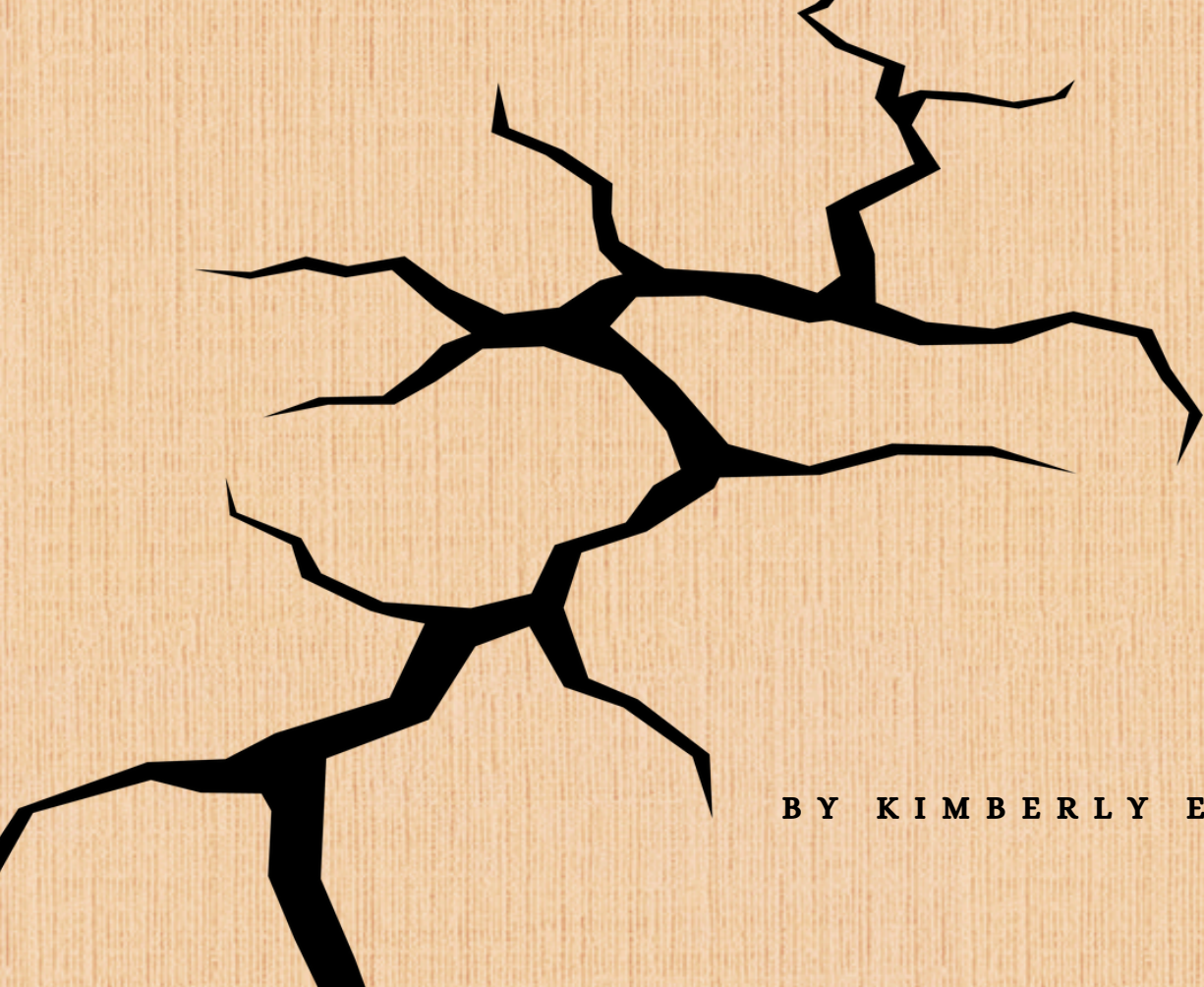


A GENTLE DECEPTION

HOW GENTLE PARENTING IS SHAPING A
DEPRAVED GENERATION IN THE END TIMES



BY KIMBERLY EDWARDS

About the book:

With over 5 billion #gentleparenting videos on TikTok, 900k Instagram posts, and hundreds of thousands of members in Facebook groups, **Gentle Parenting is the fastest growing parenting movement in the world today.** For Christians, when something is universally accepted from both the church and the godless worldviews, it's important to pause and ask the question: **is it Biblical?**

A Gentle Deception addresses this very question about Gentle Parenting and exposes the many duplicities that hide behind clever marketing and modern psychology. From defining Gentle Parenting, to revealing its dark origins, to measuring each of the core tenants to Scripture, **this book stands alone to discuss this peculiar unity between the church and the world,** and challenges followers of Jesus Christ to tune out the influencers of the world and become anchored in the Word.

Looking into the original Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible as well as the culture and context, Kimberly walks you through controversial parenting topics such as punishment, discipline, and sin nature. **Unlike any other spanking literature available, this book dissects the spanking debate strictly from a Scriptural standpoint without leaving the reader feeling trapped by the typically divisive nature of both the pro and anti-spanking movements of the last one hundred years.**

And looking at everything through the eschatological lens of Bible prophecy, Kimberly demonstrates through recent history how **the Gentle Parenting movement is playing an active part in shaping a depraved generation** that may receive the prophesied Antichrist. If you or someone you know is drawn to the teachings of Gentle Parenting, you're invited to examine it with a fresh perspective to see if it might just be **A Gentle Deception.**

A Gentle Deception

How Gentle Parenting is Shaping a Depraved Generation in the End Times

Kimberly Edwards

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.”

-Titus 2:11-15

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about me

When my husband and I were dating he asked "how many kids do you want to have?" and I eagerly answered, "Ten! A dozen! However many the Lord blesses me with!" His face beamed.

"Me too!"

After 18 years of being in a variety of care-taking positions with children to intentionally prepare for being a mom one day - babysitting, nannying, leading youth at church, and volunteering on youth mission trips - the Lord blessed my husband and I in our first year of marriage with our first child, and we've been blessed with several more since!

People often think we're nuts, but we both hold to the belief that children are a blessing from the Lord, arrows in the quiver, His inheritance (Psalm 127:3-5). We also trust that the Lord will provide all that we need for each child He gives us, both physically and spiritually.

And He has *always* provided! Needless to say, we are very passionate about raising our family to know, love, and follow Jesus.

***"2020 was a big wake up call to our family.
We witnessed so many people in the
church falling for deceptions."***

When the world shut down and churches closed their doors, we opened up our Bibles to the book of Revelation. We have been studying end times prophecy ever since, and the more we tune out influencers and just read the Bible alone, the more clearly we see the different deceptions.

Not only the lies found in government and Big Pharma, but also in the cultural movements. Many of which are promoted in the church: Self-help, enneagram, manifesting, yoga, universalism, dominion theology... and Gentle Parenting.

If you are practicing Gentle Parenting, I know the urge to build up a wall of defenses may be strong as you read this book, but ask yourself this: is it really any surprise that false teachings that appear godly but deny God's power might also wiggle their way into homes and families?

Before I dive into the Gentle Parenting movement, take a moment to empty out any other influencer's voice and just ask yourself:

What is my goal with my children?

Is your goal to raise children who are happy? Successful? Well-adjusted and emotionally mature? Well-liked by their peers? Moral and good? What standards would you use to measure your goal?

Is it Biblical?

Explore that question with me about the fastest growing parenting movement - what might just be ***a gentle deception.***

-Kimberly

Dedicated to my children. The Lord truly blessed me with the greatest honor and privilege when He brought each one of you into my life - to be entrusted with your care and training. May the Lord work through each of you in this warped and crooked generation, that you may shine among them like the stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the Word of Life.
(Philippians 2:14-18)

-Mama

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WHAT IS GENTLE PARENTING?

Before the Gentle Parenting movement began, there was "Authoritative Parenting." Let me introduce you to Dr. Diana Baumrind. She was a clinical and developmental psychologist¹ whose claim to fame was in 1966 when she introduced "the three main parenting styles:" *Authoritative*, *Authoritarian*, and *Permissive*, with the belief that the Authoritative style was ideal. Remember your parenting goals? Well, here is what Dr. Baumrind believed was the goal of parenting:²

“To achieve a healthy, well-developed child of optimal *competence* and *character*.”

(from *Parenting for Character: Five Experts, Five Practices*.)



Dr. Diana Baumrind¹

She defines competence as “That which helps us reach our personal and social goals. The ability to know right from wrong and to regulate our actions in order to choose right rather than wrong. Optimal competence requires a balance between being self-oriented and being other-oriented” and *character* as “The aspect of personality that relates to accountability, persistence in the face of obstacles, and control of impulses” (*Parenting for Character: Five Experts, Five Practices*).²

Is this your parenting goal?



" TRAIN UP A CHILD IN THE
WAY HE SHOULD GO AND WHEN
HE IS OLD HE WILL NOT
DEPART FROM IT."
- P R O V E R B S 2 2 : 6

Perhaps that's your goal exactly! Or perhaps that really only encompasses part of it? Or maybe not at all. But keep that in mind when reading these parenting styles that are based on the works of Dr. Baumrind.

Today you'll find a variety of similar descriptions of the three parenting styles across the internet. Here is a summary of them combining information from Psychology Today,³ Parenting Science,⁴ and Parenting for Brain.⁵

Authoritarian parents seek to maintain a high level of control over their children by asserting power over them through severe punishments such as spanking with little to no discussion or reasoning with them.

Permissive parents are attentive and warm, engaging in play and conversation with their children. But seeking to befriend their children rather than parent, they set few if any rules.

Authoritative parents are warm and attentive, but firm in setting clear boundaries. Rather than using punishments, they use reasoning and *discipline* to enforce rules.

They define *discipline* for the Authoritative parent as focusing on explanations, natural consequences, emotional coaching, and positive reinforcement to develop empathy and concern for others in order to teach age-appropriate behavior.

So what does Gentle Parenting have to do with Authoritative Parenting?

According to Gentle Parenting influencers,

Gentle Parenting

is Authoritative Parenting

Although there is debate about the first person to use the term "Gentle Parenting," most attribute the origin to Sarah Ockwell-Smith⁶ in the early 2000's. There are now many names for this parenting movement including discipleship parenting, peaceful parenting, peace-maker parenting, connected parenting, attachment parenting, conscious parenting, and positive parenting. The list continues to grow with the movement's popularity. All of them, however, claim to be an offshoot of "Authoritative Parenting" and follow the same basic ideals. Three of these key ideals are:

- **“Never Use Rewards & Punishments”**
- **“Always Validate and Respect Your Child's Emotions”**
- **“Only Use Age-Appropriate, Natural Consequences”**

Let's unpack these a bit.



“Never Use Rewards & Punishments”

According to Gentle Parenting, you should avoid using rewards and punishments as they are seen as arbitrary. They sometimes refer to punishments in particular⁷ as "illogical consequences." The belief is that if you use rewards and punishments, then you will condition your children to only behave because they want a reward or because they're afraid of the punishment. **The goal with Gentle Parenting is not to have obedience**,⁸ the goal is to have a child who is motivated to do the right thing because it's the right thing, because they understand how it affects others and are empathetic, and for Christian Gentle Parents,⁹ because of the love they have for Jesus.

They reject the idea of punishments such as time outs and removal of privileges, and absolutely prohibit any form of spanking.¹⁰ Instead, they would teach that when your child crosses a boundary you have established, you should allow natural consequences to take place (with the exception of situations where someone is in immediate physical danger), then affirm your child's feelings and get them calm enough to talk with you (a.k.a. "regulated"),¹¹ explore reasons for their behavior, then discuss why you have the rules in place and how you can help them follow the rules next time. Christian Gentle Parents teach that because Jesus paid for all our sins already, we can discipline from a place of peace¹² instead of creating for our children fear of retribution.





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“Always Validate & Respect Your Child's Emotions”

When your child is biting, hitting, or experiencing a “temper tantrum,” instead of verbally condemning their behavior, Gentle Parenting would say to first remove them or others from any immediate physical danger¹³, then take time to validate their feelings¹⁴. Once they are calm, they say that you should try to find the reason for their unwanted behavior, and then if applicable, you may review the natural consequences that took place to help teach them.

They say that the goal is to create a safe space for them to fully express their emotions that are too big for their little minds to process and to be the calm¹⁵ in the midst of their storm. The belief is that children are not capable of emotional or physical self-control until their brains are more developed, so you should let go of any expectations that are psychologically beyond their capacity for their age. Instead they say you should model the behaviors of mutual respect and courteous treatment¹⁶ that you want them to display when they are old enough to do so with pure intentions. The goal with this approach is to foster empathy, understanding, and respectful communication¹⁷ that will lead to emotional intelligence and maturity.

“Only Use Age-Appropriate Natural Consequences”

Relying heavily upon modern neuroscience and child development research Gentle Parenting influencers advise¹⁸ that until the age of six or seven, all consequences for unwanted behavior should be exclusively natural because they believe children are psychologically incapable of understanding consequences¹⁹ before then. They teach that while your child is young, you should simply point out the consequences that took place naturally and reason with them about why that was unfavorable. When your child is old enough, they teach that you may create some agreed upon logical consequences, but you should never create an illogical consequence. For example, if your child steals a candy bar from the store, an agreed upon logical consequence could be that your child needs to go take the candy bar back and apologize to the store owner, whereas an illogical consequence would be that your child misses out on something completely unrelated such as a friend’s birthday party or playdate.

They teach that consequences are only one aspect of discipline. They say that the primary goal should be finding out the root cause²⁰ of the unwanted behavior or identifying your own triggers.²¹ The belief is that all your child’s unwanted behavior either stems from an unmet need²² that you can fill or that your expectations of your child’s behavior are unrealistic for their developmental stage. For instance, they would say that if you find yourself short-tempered because your four year old child is whining, you should realize you have unrealistic expectations of a four year old because whining is perfectly normal at this developmental stage and therefore a reasonable behavior for them to exhibit.²³



Each author, expert, psychology publication, social media influencer, and blogger has their own spin on it, but those are the basics of Gentle Parenting. New graphics and similar language, whether you are looking at a secular account or a Christian account, **they all claim that Gentle Parenting is synonymous with Authoritative Parenting.**

But is it?

Let's compare Gentle Parenting to Dr. Baumrind's definition of Authoritative Parenting. She is, after all, the true founder. Are they really synonymous as they claim to be?



“AND NO WONDER,
FOR EVEN SATAN
DISGUISES HIMSELF
AS AN ANGEL OF
LIGHT. SO IT IS NO
SURPRISE IF HIS
SERVANTS, ALSO,
DISGUISE
THEMSELVES AS
SERVANTS OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS.
THEIR END WILL
CORRESPOND TO
THEIR DEEDS.”

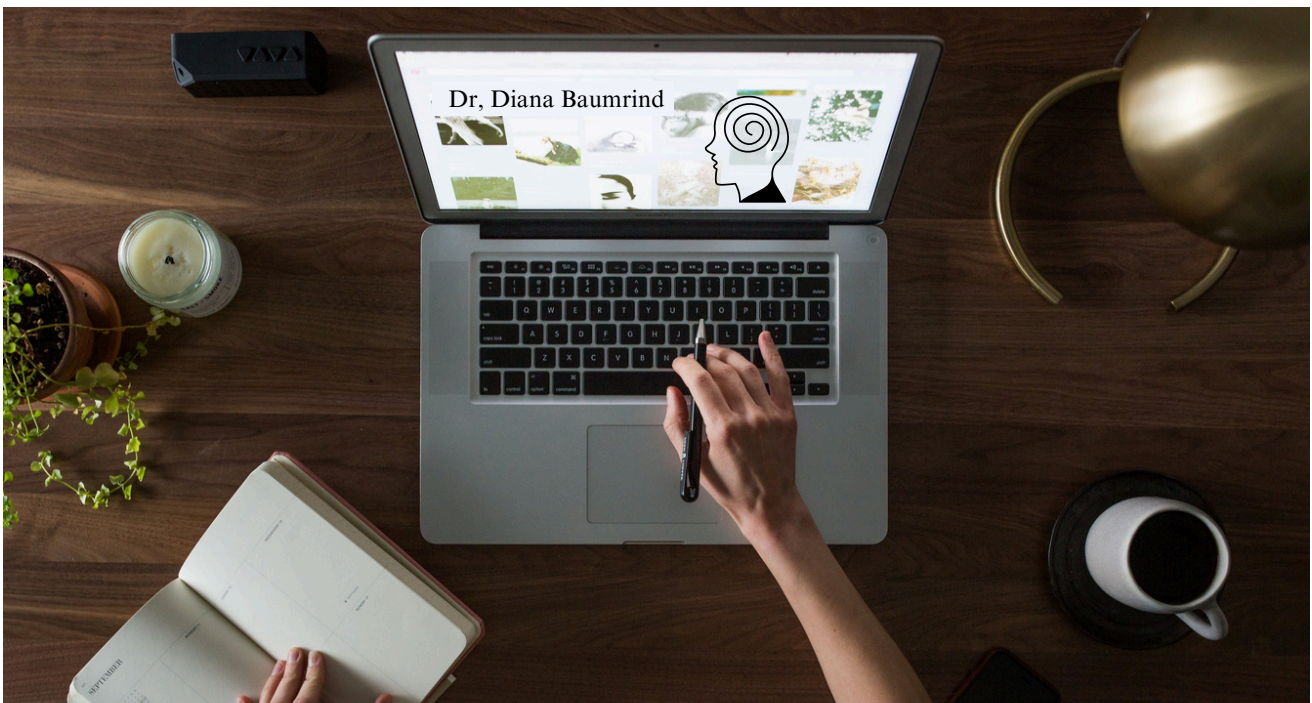
- 2 CORINTHIANS

11:14 - 15

chapter 02

THE BIG DECEPTION

One thing every Gentle Parenting guru has in common is they claim it is synonymous with Authoritative Parenting.²⁴ And although we read through the description of all the different parenting styles according to today's popular psychology and parenting sources, we need to look at what Dr. Baumrind has to say about the three parenting styles she famously wrote about in her 1966 article, Effects of Authoritative Parental Control on Child Behavior.²⁵



The Three Parenting Styles,²⁵ as defined by Dr. Diana Baumrind:

Authoritarian parents "attempt to **shape, control, and evaluate the behavior and attitudes of the child in accordance with a set standard of conduct, usually an absolute standard, theologically motivated and formulated by a higher authority. She values obedience as a virtue and favors punitive, forceful measures** to curb self-will at points where the child's actions or beliefs conflict with what she thinks is right conduct...she regards the preservation of order and traditional structure as a highly valued end in itself. **She does not encourage verbal give and take, believing that the child should accept her word for what is right**" (page 890).

Permissive parents "attempt to behave in a **non-punitive, acceptant, and affirmative** manner toward the child's impulses, desires, and actions. **She consults with him about policy decisions and gives explanations for family rules...She allows the child to regulate his own activities as much as possible, avoids the exercise of control, and does not encourage him to obey** externally defined standards. **She attempts to use reason and manipulation, but not overt power, to accomplish her ends**" (page 889).

Authoritative parents "attempt to direct the child's activities in a **rational, issue-oriented** manner. **She encourages verbal give and take, shares with the child the reasoning behind her policy, and solicits his objections when he refuses to conform. Both autonomous self-will and disciplined conformity are valued...she exerts firm control at points of parent-child divergence, but does not hem the child in with restrictions...She uses reason, power, and shaping by regime and reinforcement to achieve her objectives and does not base her decisions on group consensus or the individual child's desires.**" Baumrind goes on to say that "the way in which authoritative control is used" can be found in the Montessori classroom where the teacher is "**ready to assume an authoritarian role if it is necessary**" (page 891).

In her article²⁵ *Effects of Authoritative Parenting Control on Child Behavior* **she pointed out the harm of non-punitive parenting**, providing the example of acts such as “sneaking sweets and smacking a younger sibling” stating that these types of behavior “fall into the category of **intrinsically rewarding.**” In other words, **to simply allow for natural consequences to occur in those situations**, or to use “nonrewards” as she calls them, **the child may view this as “tacit approval of his behavior”** (page 896).

She goes on to say that **“it is more reasonable to teach parents who wish to learn to use punishment effectively and humanely how to do so than to preserve the myth that punishment is ineffective or intrinsically harmful... Parents can also be taught to accompany punishment with an explanation in which both the change-worthy act, and where possible a more acceptable act, are specified”** (page 897).

Regarding the **types of punishment Authoritative Parents ought to use**, Dr. Baumrind supported parental autonomy with regards to spanking. She stated in her article²⁶ *Are Spankings Injunctions Scientifically Supported?* that **“all authoritative parents used spanking at least occasionally...Multiple studies have shown that spanking is associated with adverse outcomes only when children perceive their parents as rejecting them.”** She also stated that **“... children as young as two or three cooperate with reasoning more when it is backed up with time-out or privilege removal at least ten percent of the time...that even the most clinically defiant two-to six-year-olds will cooperate with time-out if enforced when necessary with an effective back-up tactic, such as a two-swat spank or room isolation”** (page 85).

Gentle Parenting

is **not** authoritative parenting

“SEE TO IT THAT NO ONE TAKES YOU
CAPTIVE BY PHILOSOPHY AND EMPTY
DECEIT, ACCORDING TO HUMAN
TRADITION, ACCORDING TO THE
ELEMENTAL SPIRITS OF THE WORLD,
AND NOT ACCORDING TO CHRIST.”
- COLOSSIANS 2 : 8



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So if **Gentle Parenting** is not Authoritative Parenting by the definition of the doctor who established it, then what exactly *is* it? Do you remember Dr. Baumrind's description of **Permissive Parenting**?

- **No punishments**
- **Accepting**
- **Affirming**
- **Consulting children on family rules**
- **Uses reasoning**
- **Obedience is not expected**

A quick search on the internet will lead you to many similar sounding quotes about the differences between Permissive Parenting and Gentle Parenting:

"There's a big different between 'no discipline' and 'no punishment.'" ²⁷

-Good Housekeeping

"Discipline means to teach not to punish." ²⁸

-Flourishing Homes & Families

*"Gentle parenting and discipline are perceived to be at odds with each other; however, this myth is rooted in a misunderstanding of what discipline actually is. In short, discipline, which stems from the Latin word *discere* meaning 'learning'. Discipline therefore means teaching children more appropriate and socially acceptable behaviours. Modern western society believes discipline and punishment are the same. They are not." ²⁹*

-Sarah Ockwell-Smith

Gentle Parenting claims to use discipline, but what exactly is discipline?

"Discipline (noun)

1 a : control gained by enforcing obedience or order

b : orderly or prescribed conduct or pattern of behavior

c : self-control

2 : punishment

3 : training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character

4 : a field of study

5 : a rule or system of rules governing conduct or activity"

-Merriam-Webster Dictionary³⁰

The dictionary goes on to say that “discipline comes from *discipulus*, the Latin word for pupil, which also provided the source of the word disciple... Given that several meanings of discipline deal with study, governing one’s behavior, and instruction, one might assume that the word’s first meaning in English had to do with education. In fact, the earliest known use of discipline appears to be punishment-related...”³⁰

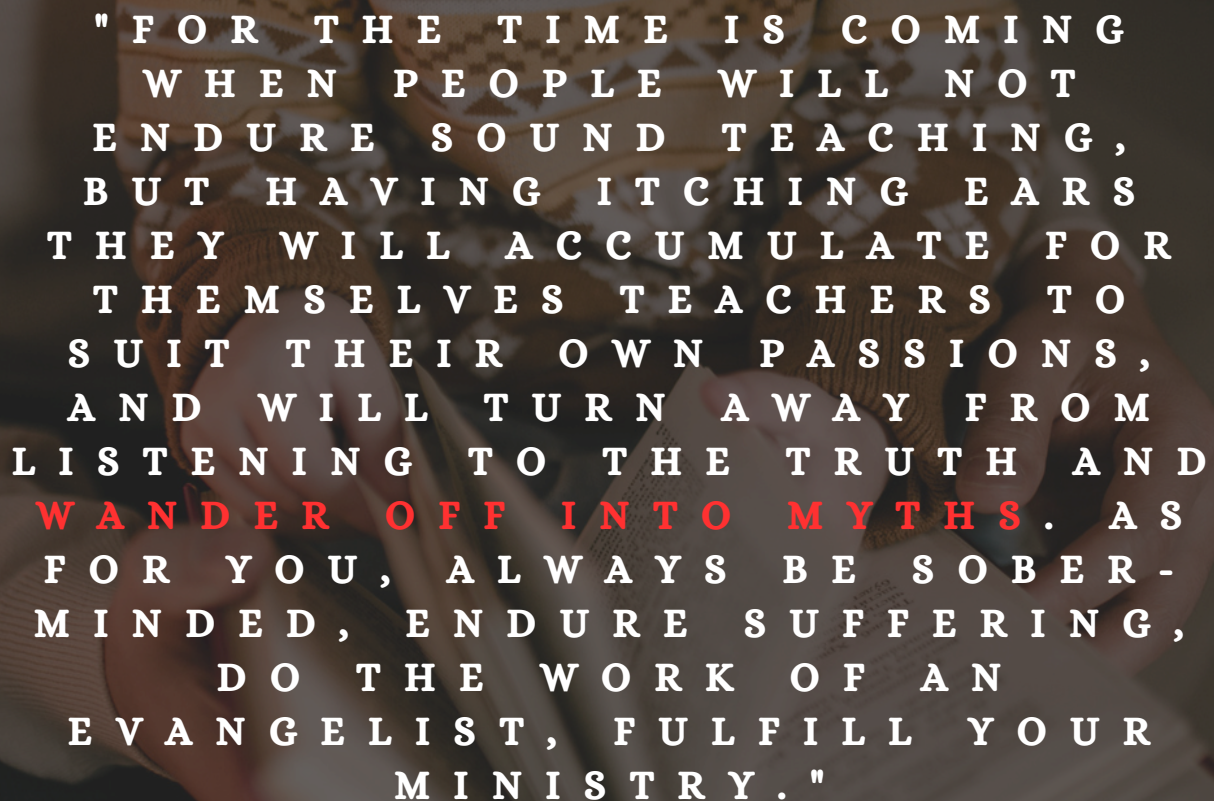
Gentle Parenting has changed the definition of “discipline.” Not only is it different from the dictionary’s definition, but it’s completely different from the definition that Dr. Diana Baumrind used when identifying the Authoritative Parenting style with which Gentle Parenting claims to be synonymous.

Gentle Parenting has removed the aspects of discipline that relate to control, obedience, orderly conduct, behavior, self-control, and punishment in order **to claim that they are disciplining their children when in fact, they are not.**

Gentle Parenting being equated to Authoritative Parenting rather than Permissive Parenting hinges on their false definition of discipline.

Now that we understand the first layer of deception, that Gentle Parenting is NOT in fact Authoritative Parenting, let's take a closer look at the Christian version of Gentle Parenting.

And let's measure all of it to Scripture.

A photograph of a person's hands holding an open Bible. The person is wearing a patterned shirt. The Bible is open to a page with text. A dark semi-transparent box is overlaid on the image, containing white text. The text is a quote from the Bible, with the words "WANDER OFF INTO MYTHS" highlighted in red.

"FOR THE TIME IS COMING
WHEN PEOPLE WILL NOT
ENDURE SOUND TEACHING,
BUT HAVING ITCHING EARS
THEY WILL ACCUMULATE FOR
THEMSELVES TEACHERS TO
SUIT THEIR OWN PASSIONS,
AND WILL TURN AWAY FROM
LISTENING TO THE TRUTH AND
WANDER OFF INTO MYTHS. AS
FOR YOU, ALWAYS BE SOBER-
MINDED, ENDURE SUFFERING,
DO THE WORK OF AN
EVANGELIST, FULFILL YOUR
MINISTRY."

- 2 TIMOTHY 4 : 3 - 5

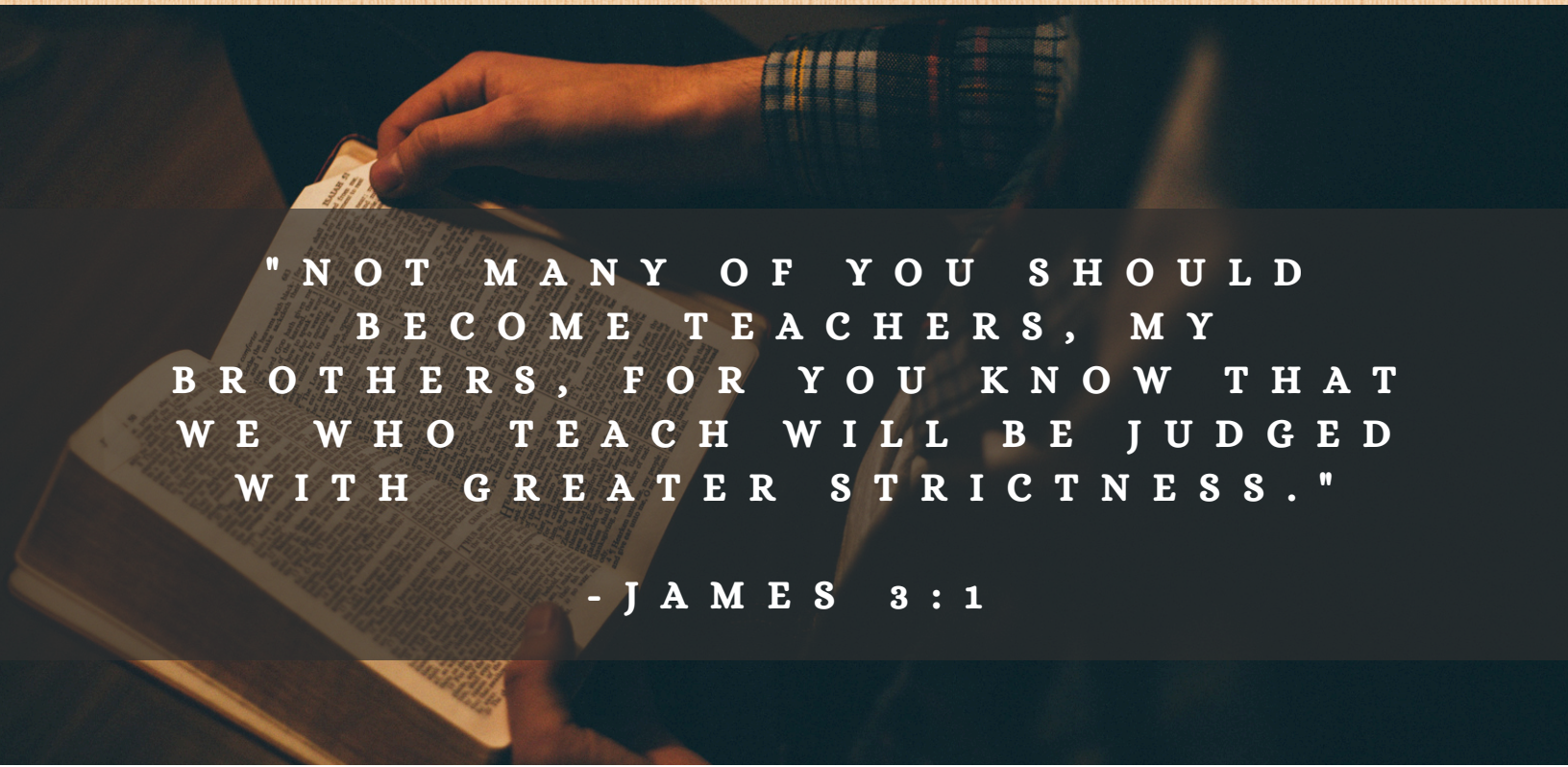
chapter 03



Before I begin, I want to first say that I do not expose this lightheartedly. I have spent countless hours pouring over Instagram highlight reels, articles, blog posts, website pages, comment threads, and books to prayerfully discern truth from deception. It is not my desire to pick apart every single little post and comment that these Christian Gentle Parenting influencers put out there. It is not my desire to quarrel with them over anything trifling. Many of the things I've seen seem well-intentioned, and they appear to sincerely love Jesus and desire to follow His ways. I attempted respectful communication with some of the influencers I researched most closely before I even thought to begin this project, and I'm grateful for those who have been open to having that dialogue in the comment threads. Perhaps they'll read this, perhaps not.

It is my hope and prayer that they would be rooted in the sound doctrine of the Word of God *alone* and tune out the many worldly influencers they've admittedly allowed to shape their view of the Bible, children, and parenting. The list of extra-biblical material they recommend to their followers is extensive and has the potential for great confusion and harm in these days where people are accumulating teachers for themselves to suit their own passions while ignoring the sound doctrine of Scripture alone. By the end of this book you will know the true origin of the false teachings they promote, and I hope you too will have a heart of compassion for our brothers and sisters in Christ who have been deceived by clever words.

I don't doubt their intentions, I feel certain that none of them are even aware that they have been led astray, nor would I accuse them of intentionally leading anyone else astray. I just pray that the Holy Spirit would reveal the truth and convict them in His time. The Bible tells us to expose darkness, so in this chapter it is only my desire to expose that, not to personally attack any brother or sister in Christ. I also pray that the Lord would search and know my heart in this, and reveal to me anything that needs to be cleansed.



" NOT MANY OF YOU SHOULD
BECOME TEACHERS, MY
BROTHERS, FOR YOU KNOW THAT
WE WHO TEACH WILL BE JUDGED
WITH GREATER STRICTNESS. "

- J A M E S 3 : 1

In this chapter I will present views from various Christian Gentle Parenting influencers. It's broken down into 5 sections. With each view, I will point back to Scripture and simply ask this question:

Is it Biblical?

SECTION 1 - GRACE & MERCY

The first view I want to discuss comes from one of the most popular Christian Gentle Parenting influencers on the internet: Flourishing Homes Families,³¹ co-founded by Dr. David and Amanda Erickson.³²

They offer a variety of both free and paid online parenting services including coaching, workshops, and a mentorship community. The image³³ to the right is from their prolific Instagram account:

Behavior-centered, punishment-based parenting is counterfeit Christian parenting that mocks the holy, history-making, heaven-changing work of Christ on the cross. It is an approach to parenting that teaches children that grace and good favor is based on their behavior, rather than the resplendent and unconditional love of Jesus.

Amanda Erickson



@flourishinghomesandfamilies, Instagram, "THEOLOGY THURSDAY: Behavior-centered or Gospel-centered?" May 14, 2020

- 1. When we as parents punish our children when they disobey, are we in fact mocking Christ on the cross?**
- 2. Does it teach our children that grace is earned by works, not a gift of God through Jesus?**

Let's look at Hebrews 12 to begin answering the first question.

"And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? 'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives.'" -Hebrews 12:5-6

The greek word for *discipline* in this verse is paideia. According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon, it means "the whole training and education of children" and "whatever in adults also cultivates the soul, especially by correcting mistakes and curbing the passions, hence instruction which aims at the increase of virtue" and "chastisement, chastening." It comes from the root word paideuo; which means "properly, to train children," "to chastise or castigate with words, to correct," "use employed of God, to chasten by the infliction of evils and calamities," and "to chastise with blows, to scourge: of a father punishing a son." According to Strong's Concordance, it also means nurture, as we see the nurturing love of our Father is never removed when He disciplines those He loves.^{34, 35}

The greek word for chastise in this verse is mastigoó. According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon it means "to scourge" or "flog." Strong's Concordance explains that "God sending severe pain [is] in the best eternal interests of the believer" and "is all-wise when we experience temporal suffering. Hence, it always works for our greater eternal gain as we live in faith."³⁶



Let's continue on in Hebrews 12.

*"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? **If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.** Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 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. **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." -Hebrews 12:7-11*



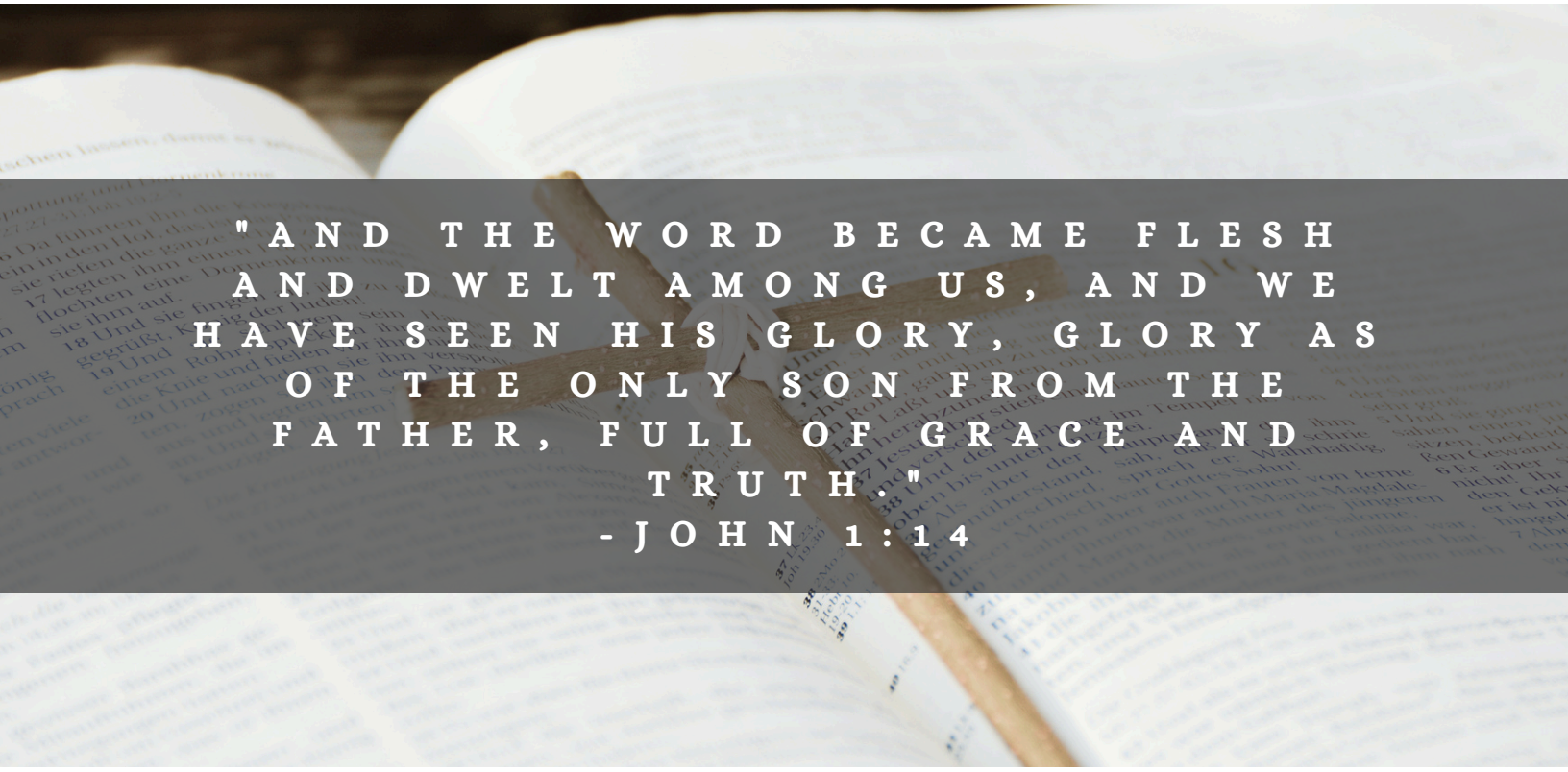
The greek word for *painful* in this verse is *lupé*. According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon it means "sorrow, pain, grief."

It is inclusive of both physical and emotional pain as it may speak to "sorrow... at the loss of... earthly possessions" or pain and grief from "affliction."³⁷

Discipline is more than just teaching. It's also more than just punishing. We can't focus on one or the other. We need both. And we need it to be both painful and nurturing at the same time.

Grace and Truth.

Properly disciplining children is multifaceted and it encompasses listening to their feelings, seeking to understand why they disobeyed, teaching why it was wrong, instructing them on what they need to do differently in the future, measuring their heart for true repentance, and punishing them accordingly. Hebrews 12 is clear; discipline is supposed to be painful, either physically or emotionally. **Punishing our children does not mock Christ. Refusing to punish them is like making them illegitimate children.**

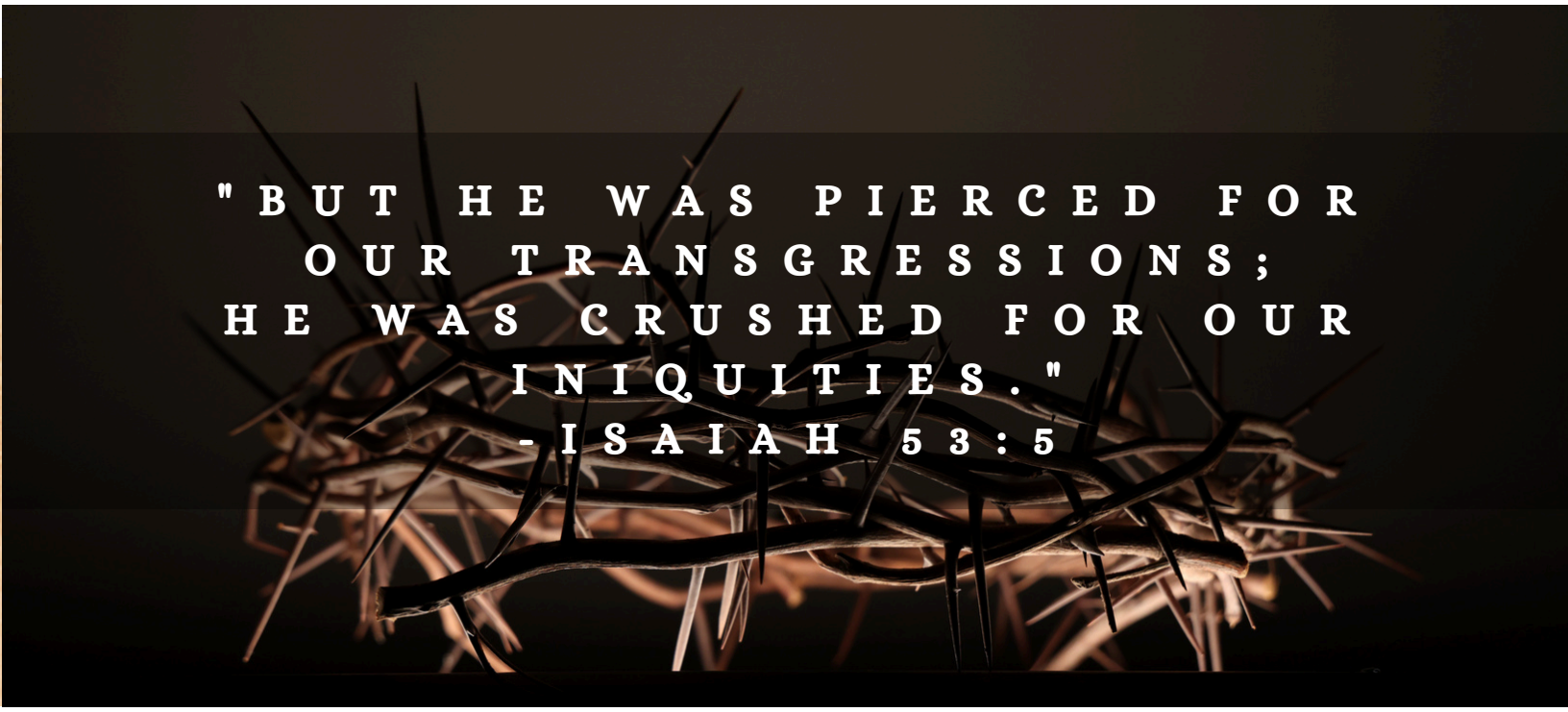


"AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH
AND DWELT AMONG US, AND WE
HAVE SEEN HIS GLORY, GLORY AS
OF THE ONLY SON FROM THE
FATHER, FULL OF GRACE AND
TRUTH."
- JOHN 1:14

Does rewarding and punishing our children's behavior teach them that grace is earned by works?

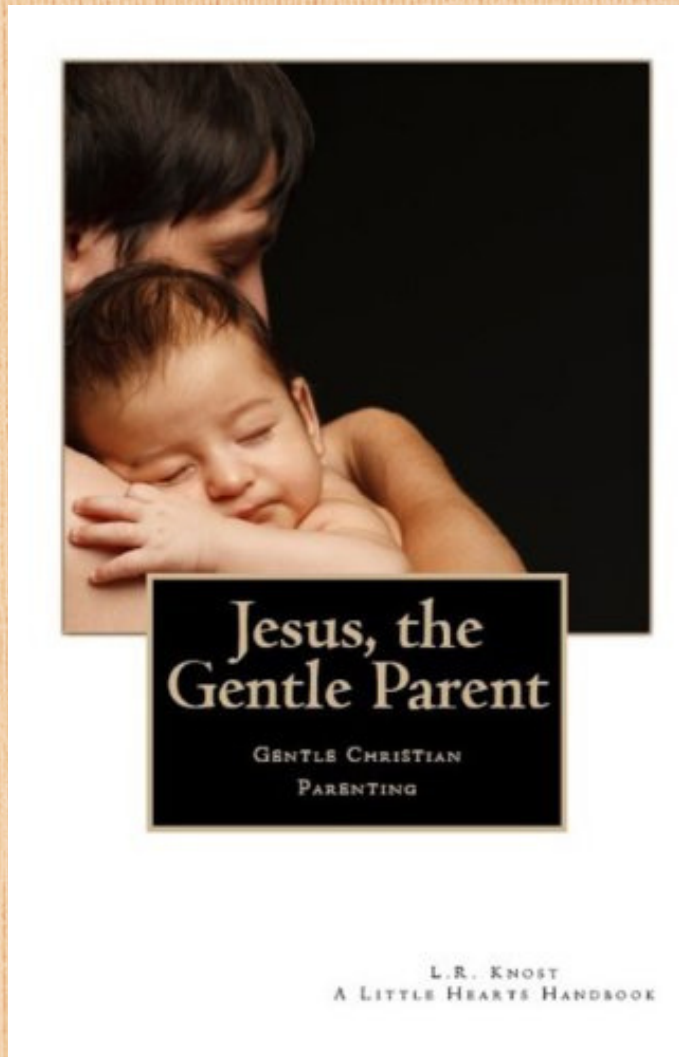
To begin answering this question, I want to bring up another post from the Flourishing Homes & Families account to help dive deeper into the theology behind their view. In their [Punish/Rewards Highlight](#),³⁸ Amanda has a video where she addresses a common question: "But what about rewards in the Bible?"

She responds by saying that yes, rewards and punishments are in the Bible. *"The question is: does it work?"* Her answer to this question is that if you read the Old Testament, you'll know that no, ***"rewards don't work just like punishments don't work in the Bible. That's why we need grace and why grace and love is the most powerful motivator. Full stop. End of story."***



" B U T H E W A S P I E R C E D F O R
O U R T R A N S G R E S S I O N S ;
H E W A S C R U S H E D F O R O U R
I N I Q U I T I E S . "

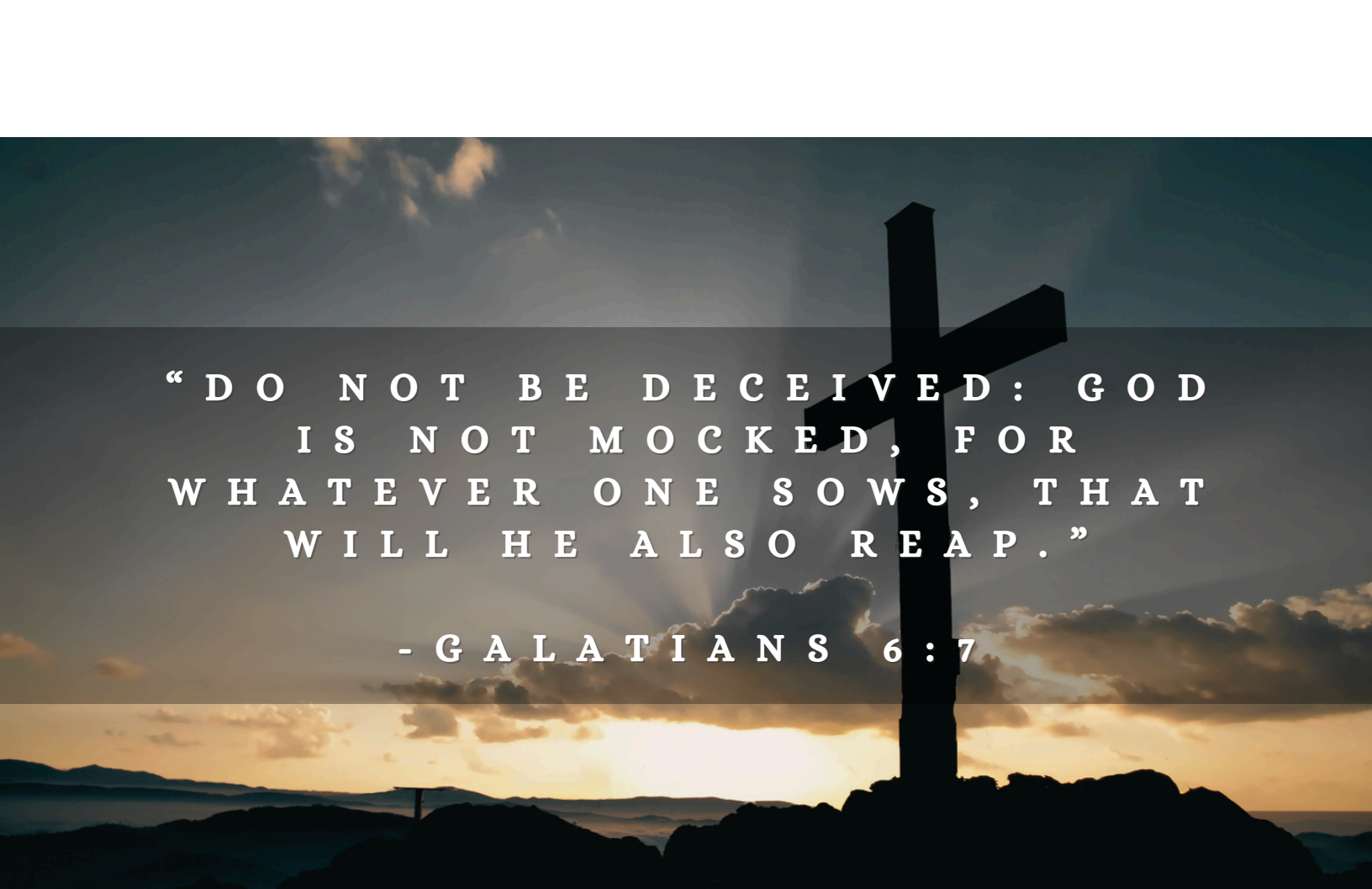
- I S A I A H 5 3 : 5



In her book *Jesus, the Gentle Parent*,³⁹ author L.R. Knost similarly comments on the punishment-based style of parenting that God the Father uses in the Old Testament. *“No matter how many rules, how many threats, how much follow-thru on punishments that were meted out, punishment-based parenting just flat out didn’t work, even for God... So why did He do it? ...to show humans that they aren’t God and can’t work their way or earn their way or find any other way to be God or to find God on their own, period”* (page 61).

Brothers and sisters, do not be deceived by this false teaching. God is infallible. The purpose of the law was to train and guide until faith came in (Galatians 3:24). We don't need grace because God's parenting method did not work.

**We need grace because of our sin.
God’s ways are perfect.**



“ DO NOT BE DECEIVED: GOD
IS NOT MOCKED, FOR
WHATEVER ONE SOWS, THAT
WILL HE ALSO REAP.”

- GALATIANS 6:7

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." -Ephesians 2:8-9

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." -Romans 6:23

We are not saved by mercy through grace and love, we are saved by grace through faith.

*Mercy is the act of withholding a punishment that is due.
Grace is a gift that is unearned.*

One of the testimonials I received really says it perfectly:

*“I was initially very swayed by the ideas surrounding gentle parenting. I mean who doesn’t think trying to be as kind as possible to your kids is a good idea? Don’t we all want to be more loving and patient and compassionate? But the more I got involved in it, there was just something in my spirit telling me that it was a deception - a wolf in sheep’s clothing, if you will. It sounded good and right and godly, but it wasn’t. Children need discipline, not simply empathy and redirection - especially as they get older. This idea of neglecting punishment for children also started to not sit right with me. **Grace and mercy are concepts directly tied to the punishment that we know we ultimately deserve. I can’t teach my children that concept if they never think they deserve a punishment.** Children are also not always innocent - they can be manipulative and vindictive and disrespectful and hateful. Those behaviors certainly deserve something more than just empathy and compassion or redirection. These are the tactics most often employed by the gentle parenting movement - everything is so child focused and something about that didn’t sit right in my spirit either. Isaiah 3:4 came to mind - “I will make mere youths their officials; children will rule over them.” Children rely on our authority - not just our example. Yes, of course, we should discipline with love and compassion... but we should not neglect our role as the authority in our children’s lives.”*

-Kayla S.



Using rewards and punishments does not teach works based salvation, it teaches a full understanding of both mercy and grace. One must acknowledge that they are in fact sinning in order to repent.

When children understand that they have sinned and that part of God's goodness is that He is just, and that their sin always deserves punishment, they will be able to understand why mercy is so sweet, why they desperately need Jesus, and why grace is so amazing.

The trouble with the Gentle Parenting philosophy is that it doesn't teach our children that they are sinful and in need of a Savior. It teaches them that they just have unmet needs or that they aren't developed enough to control themselves. That God's goodness is rooted only in His mercy instead of also in His justice. That grace and mercy are one and the same thing and that they receive the benefits of grace without repentance or faith. It's a false teaching that depicts God the Father as fallible and harsh, and Jesus as the new and better parental figure.

“ J E S U S S A I D T O H I M , ‘ I A M T H E
W A Y , A N D T H E T R U T H , A N D T H E
L I F E . N O O N E C O M E S T O T H E
F A T H E R E X C E P T T H R O U G H M E . ’ ”

- J O H N 1 4 : 6

“ T H E S P I R I T H I M S E L F B E A R S
W I T N E S S W I T H O U R S P I R I T T H A T
W E A R E C H I L D R E N O F G O D , A N D
I F C H I L D R E N , T H E N H E I R S — H E I R S
O F G O D A N D F E L L O W H E I R S W I T H
C H R I S T , P R O V I D E D W E S U F F E R
W I T H H I M I N O R D E R T H A T W E M A Y
A L S O B E G L O R I F I E D W I T H H I M . ”

- R O M A N S 8 : 1 6 - 1 7

“ D O N O T T H I N K T H A T I H A V E
C O M E T O A B O L I S H T H E L A W O R
T H E P R O P H E T S ; I H A V E N O T C O M E
T O A B O L I S H T H E M B U T T O F U L F I L L
T H E M . ”

- M A T T H E W 5 : 7

Jesus did not replace God as our Father, He is the only way to the Father. Because Jesus canceled the record of our debt with His sacrifice on the cross (Colossians 2:14), when we put our faith in Him as Lord and Savior, we receive the gift of salvation and become sons of God. As sons, we will never taste the wrath of God (1 Thessalonians 5:9), but we will receive earthly punishments from our heavenly Father (1 Corinthians 11:17-32). Punishing our own children does not mock Jesus' work on the cross, it trains them up in the way they should go and gives them a foundation for understanding their own sin and their need for the precious blood of Jesus.

SECTION 2 - SIN NATURE

“ IF WE SAY WE HAVE NO SIN, WE
DECEIVE OURSELVES, AND THE
TRUTH IS NOT IN US. IF WE
CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS
FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE
US OUR SINS AND TO CLEANSE
US FROM ALL
UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. IF WE SAY
WE HAVE NOT SINNED, WE MAKE
HIM A LIAR, AND HIS WORD IS
NOT IN US.

- 1 JOHN 1:8 - 10

Another very dangerous teaching found in Gentle Parenting is to deny or reframe sin nature.

In *Jesus, The Gentle Parent*, L.R. Knost states that because children are made in the image of God, they are not born sinful, “they are born perfect” (page 22). She gives an example of a baby crying in the middle of the night with two sets of parents responding; one set responds to the cries with comfort and nurture, the other set ignore the cries, believing it to be the baby’s “sin nature” manifesting itself. She then makes the argument that “*believing that babies are formed by God in the womb with a fatal flaw and are therefore born as sinners, liars, and manipulators simply doesn’t make sense*” (pages 22-23).³⁹

She claims that because they are made in God's perfect image, babies "are born perfect," and that because of free will, they merely have "the capability to sin" when they are "old enough to be conscious of sin" (pages 23-24).³⁹

What does the Bible say?

Is a baby crying in the night a sin? Are babies born sinful?

You'll likely be relieved to know that I found nothing in the Bible that suggested a baby crying out in the night is a sin. Knost is right, that's a pretty ridiculous notion. And I wholeheartedly support the idea of comforting a crying baby.

But the really big question still remains:

Are babies born sinful, or perfect?



“The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.”

-Psalm 58:3

“...for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.”

-Genesis 8:21

“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity...”

-Psalm 51:5

“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned – for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law.”

-Romans 5:12-13



**“ Y E T Y O U S A Y , ‘ T H E W A Y O F
T H E L O R D I S N O T J U S T . ’
H E A R N O W , O H O U S E O F
I S R A E L : I S M Y W A Y N O T
J U S T ? I S I T N O T Y O U R W A Y S
T H A T A R E N O T J U S T ? ”
- E Z E K I E L 1 8 : 2 5**

The Bible makes it clear for us that babies are in fact born sinful, coming out of the womb with evil intentions in their hearts. I received a message from someone who, like so many of us do at some point in our faith journey, was wrestling with the concept of our sin nature:

"I didn't choose to be born... The all knowing God decided to allow Satan into the garden. Why was Satan even there? He foreknew we'd fall/sin, yet He allowed it anyway and now it's our fault and the default is Hell. Why is the default Hell? Just because Adam sinned, I didn't choose that."

-Anonymous



Is Hell the default destination for all of us from birth?

I'd like to point back to the Bible, and remind us of the many times it teaches us that God's ways are higher than our ways, that His wisdom is like foolishness to us, and that whether or not it makes sense to us in this moment, we can trust His Word for all things.

I have a few thoughts on this topic that I hope will give you something to ponder and pray over as you wrestle with what it means to be born sinful. First, let's remember that God created Satan and the angels before He created the earth (Job 38:4-7). Satan and His angels rebelled, and there was war in Heaven (Isaiah 14:12-14, Revelation 12:7-9). Hell was prepared for Satan and the fallen angels, *not for us* (Matthew 25:41). In fact, one of the tasks Christians have will be to judge the angels (1 Corinthians 6:3).

We are all born sinful, but what does that mean for babies and young children who die before they could even understand right from wrong? Do they go to heaven?



“So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” -James 4:17

What does this mean for whoever does not know the right thing to do?

“And should not I pity Nineveh... who do not know their right hand from their left...?”

-Jonah 4:12

When it comes to eternal salvation, is there mercy for children while they are still learning right from wrong?

Do babies and children go to heaven?

I hear this question all the time. I think the answer to this may be found in one of the few precious glimpses we have of Jesus as a child.


*“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey when He knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For **before the boy knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good**, the land whose two kings you dread will be deserted.”*

-Isaiah 7:14-16

Jesus was without sin...

even before He knew how to refuse evil and choose good.

The Hebrew word for “boy” in this verse is *naar*.⁴⁰ According to Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance it means “from the age of infancy to adolescence.” The vast majority of commentaries⁴¹ on this Scripture agree that Jesus was likely between the age of 2-3 as honey and curds were a common first food, and infants generally nursed for at least two years before being weaned. But we honestly don’t know for certain His exact age. The point is this: there was a time before Jesus knew right from wrong, and because we know He was without sin, that during the time before He knew right from wrong, nothing He did could have been counted as sin. Likewise, in terms of salvation, do our children’s actions count as sin before they are capable of even understanding right from wrong?



“ L E T T H E L I T T L E C H I L D R E N
C O M E T O M E A N D D O N O T
H I N D E R T H E M ,
F O R T O S U C H
B E L O N G S
T H E K I N G D O M
O F H E A V E N . ”
- M A T T H E W 1 9 : 1 4

There is another view that many Gentle Parenting influencers hold that is rooted in modern psychology and is in direct conflict with sin nature. This teaching is much more subtle, coming from the concept that “all unwanted behavior stems from an unmet need.”²⁰

I want to share a conversation I had with a parenting coach I have a lot of respect for because of the way she demonstrated such grace and humility while discussing the slippery slope that this view can have. Kat Anderson, a licensed counselor and Christian mom-coach on Instagram,⁴² is devoted to pointing people towards Jesus first and foremost. The first time I came across her account was through her fabulous reel²⁵⁶ titled “If My Kids Go To Harvard and Not Heaven, I Have Failed Them.” She is NOT a Gentle Parenting influencer, and her account has been a blessing to follow as she is committed to being anchored in the Word and I only share her story as a positive example of looking at modern psychology through the lens of the Bible.

She had posted a reel⁴³ on December 6, 2023 titled “Behind every behavior there is a need. So what’s the need?” I commented “*If behind every behavior is merely a need that needs to be met, then is their behavior a result of their sin or is their behavior a result of external circumstance?*” She responded that “*the Bible is clear that the base of it all is our sinful nature. No debate there. Additionally, I do believe that sometimes our behavior is specifically related to a need. Hunger, attention, being cold, over tired, feeling hurt. Can some of those things be directly correlated to sin- absolutely they can!*”

She then provided good examples of how sin nature and needs can coexist. One of her examples was of parents who out of their sin nature never engage or interact with their child and how that unmet need might lead the child to elicit attention through unwanted behavior.

As we continued to discuss, I asked “*are there always unmet needs? ...Because if so, it really begs some follow up questions, like are all sins really just unmet needs?*” I continued to ask that if all sin stems from an unmet need, what does that say about Adam and Eve in the garden, David with Bathsheba, or even Israel in the Bible? This philosophy in psychology “*is a slippery slope to a false gospel... that stems from a denial of God and sin.*”

Kat responded by saying “*I’ll be honest that I haven’t thought about it in this depth, but I see what you’re saying and appreciate you challenging me here. I guess I would say, ‘no’ there aren’t always unmet needs. Our sin nature is at the root of it all. We need God. The truth is even if all our needs were met, and even when they ARE being met, we still sin. We will always sin. God’s system is infallible. My intention is not to deny God or sin. However, I can see how it can be a slippery slope when not clarified. Appreciate the dialogue.*”

Kat’s humble heart, dedication to the Lord, and keen discernment to recognize false teachings are inspiring and bring me a lot of hope.

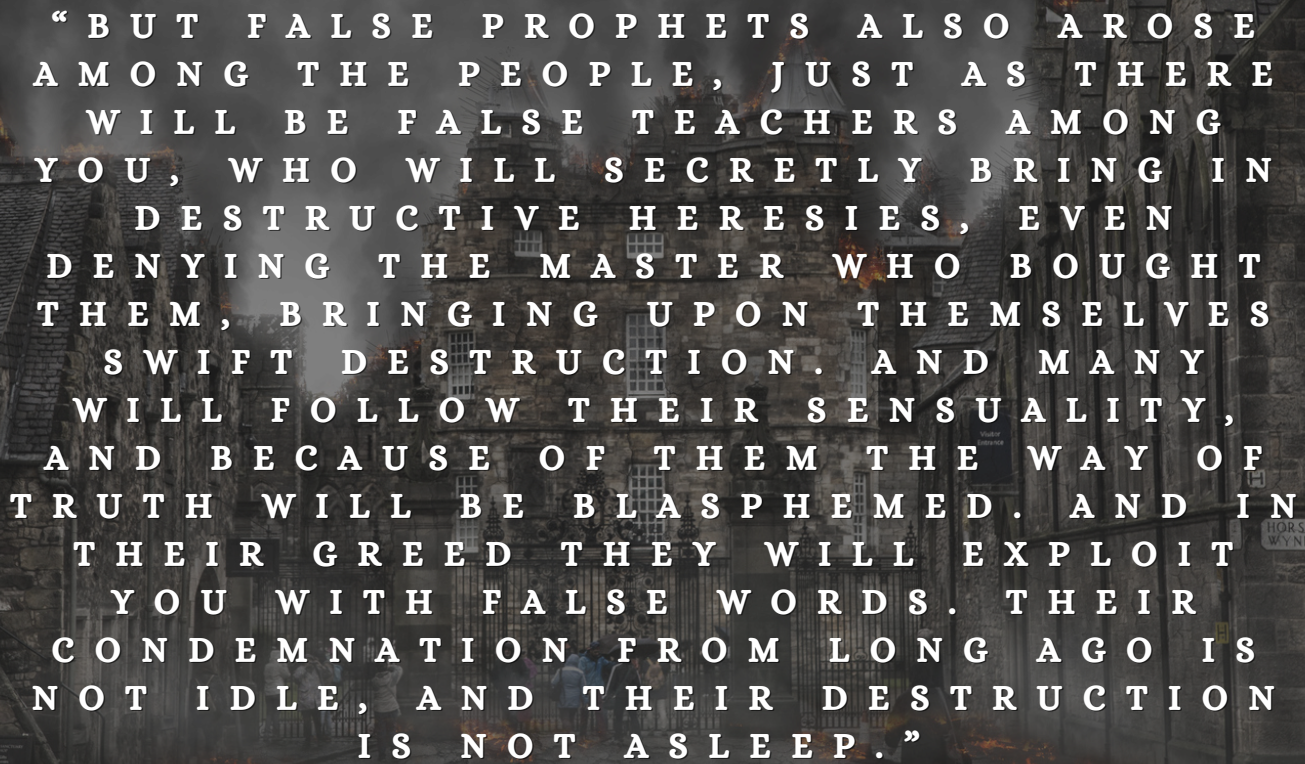
We must be so very careful; **modern psychology has the appearance of godliness** in that it works to produce virtuous fruits in people, develop character, empathy, and moral fiber through self-awareness and self-care. But in its very roots, **modern psychology denies both sin and God while pointing each person to themselves for the source of their own betterment.**^{125, 127}

2 Timothy 3:1-5 warns us to avoid people who appear godly but deny its power, and the power of God is the gospel, the word of the cross, Jesus crucified and resurrected to pay our penalty for our sin and offer us His **reward in Heaven** (Romans 1:16, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 1:24).

*“If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, **imagining that godliness is a means of gain.**” -1 Timothy 6:3-5*

When it comes to modern psychology, be sure to measure it all to Scripture and make certain that it does not lead to a false gospel.





“ BUT FALSE PROPHETS ALSO AROSE
AMONG THE PEOPLE, JUST AS THERE
WILL BE FALSE TEACHERS AMONG
YOU, WHO WILL SECRETLY BRING IN
DESTRUCTIVE HERESIES, EVEN
DENYING THE MASTER WHO BOUGHT
THEM, BRINGING UPON THEMSELVES
SWIFT DESTRUCTION. AND MANY
WILL FOLLOW THEIR SENSUALITY,
AND BECAUSE OF THEM THE WAY OF
TRUTH WILL BE BLASPHEMED. AND IN
THEIR GREED THEY WILL EXPLOIT
YOU WITH FALSE WORDS. THEIR
CONDEMNATION FROM LONG AGO IS
NOT IDLE, AND THEIR DESTRUCTION
IS NOT ASLEEP.”

- 2 PETER 2 : 1 - 3

SECTION 3 - ROD OF DISCIPLINE

If we are born sinful, and the sins of childhood do not count against us eternally, then what do we do with our children regarding their sin during these early years of learning? What does it even look like for a baby to sin?

My husband and I love to sit in the front row at church. When we lived in Nashville, our pastor enjoyed pointing to us in the service when telling some kind of joke or story, and we enjoyed playing along. When my firstborn was just a few weeks old, we attended church for Mother's Day,⁴⁴ and the pastor brought in his Auntie Helen to do a Q&A panel about parenting. She had successfully raised 7 children to become thriving Christian adults and he wanted her to share the incredible journey the Lord brought her family through and impart wisdom to the new and aspiring parents in the congregation as Titus 2 instructs.⁴⁵ At the end of the Q&A, the pastor pointed to our family in the front and asked his Aunt if she could give just one more piece of advice to the Edwards family as brand new parents.

I'll never forget it. She looked us straight in the eyes and said very earnestly in her lovely Australian accent, *"You want to spank them early, and spank them often."* The congregation laughed, some very uncomfortably, and the pastor chuckled and made a comment about remembering some spankings himself, but also mentioning something about modern psychology, gentle methods, and time outs. Auntie Helen continued looking at us though, and said with an equal amount of sternness and tenderness, *"I'm talking six to nine months old when they first start to wiggle on the changing table, you warn them, and when they squirm again, you give them a good pop on their bottom."* The congregation laughed again while others gasped a bit, and our pastor graciously transitioned the service to the closing prayer.

Auntie Helen was right though. When my son was about seven months old, he began rolling over during diaper changes. It was honestly quite dangerous because I was trying to keep him from falling off the table with one hand holding two squirming feet, while trying to clean poop with the other hand. I remember feeling like I wouldn't be able to keep him safe if he didn't stop. I looked into his eyes as I firmly told him to stop squirming. I could see it clearly in his precious little blue eyes; he understood me. He knew what I was saying, and he was choosing not to obey.

Willful disobedience in diapers.



Those Rod Verses...

Sifting through comments on posts and blogs, I've found that followers of Gentle Parenting largely consider all forms of spanking to be child abuse that should be illegal everywhere.⁴⁶ Since there are verses in the Bible that speak to the physical punishment of children through the rod of correction, Christian Gentle Parenting advocates have a variety of different approaches to these "rod verses." They aren't the first people to question whether or not it's Biblical to spank your children. In fact, I don't know a single parent who enjoys even the prospect of spanking their children. Do you? Let's first read these rod verses, then let's see what some of the Christian Gentle Parenting influencers have to say about them:

*"Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him *is diligent to discipline him." *or "disciplines him early."*

-Proverbs 13:24

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

-Proverbs 22:15

"Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with a rod, you will save his soul from Sheol."

-Proverbs 23:13-14

"The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. When the wicked increase, transgression increases, but the righteous will look upon their downfall. Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart."

-Proverbs 29:15-17

In her blog, [L.R. Knost](#) interprets these verses in this manner:

“He who spares his ~~rod~~ wisdom, leadership, protection ~~hates~~ does not love, does not choose or show a preference for his son, but he who loves him ~~disciplines~~ offers verbal instruction and teaching to him promptly.”

-Proverbs 13:24

“Do not withhold ~~discipline~~ verbal instruction and teaching, reasoning together from a ~~child~~ young man; if you ~~punish~~ guide, trigger his conscience, favorably impress, entice/entrance them with ~~the rod~~ wisdom, leadership, protection, they will not ~~die~~ follow a path of destruction. ~~Punish~~ Guide, trigger his conscience, favorably impress, entice/entrance them with ~~the rod~~ wisdom, leadership, protection and save them from ~~death~~ following a path of destruction.” -Proverbs 23:13

(L.R. Knost’s [5/10/14 blog post Spare the Rod: The Heart of the Matter](#), [littleheartsbooks.com](#).)⁴⁷

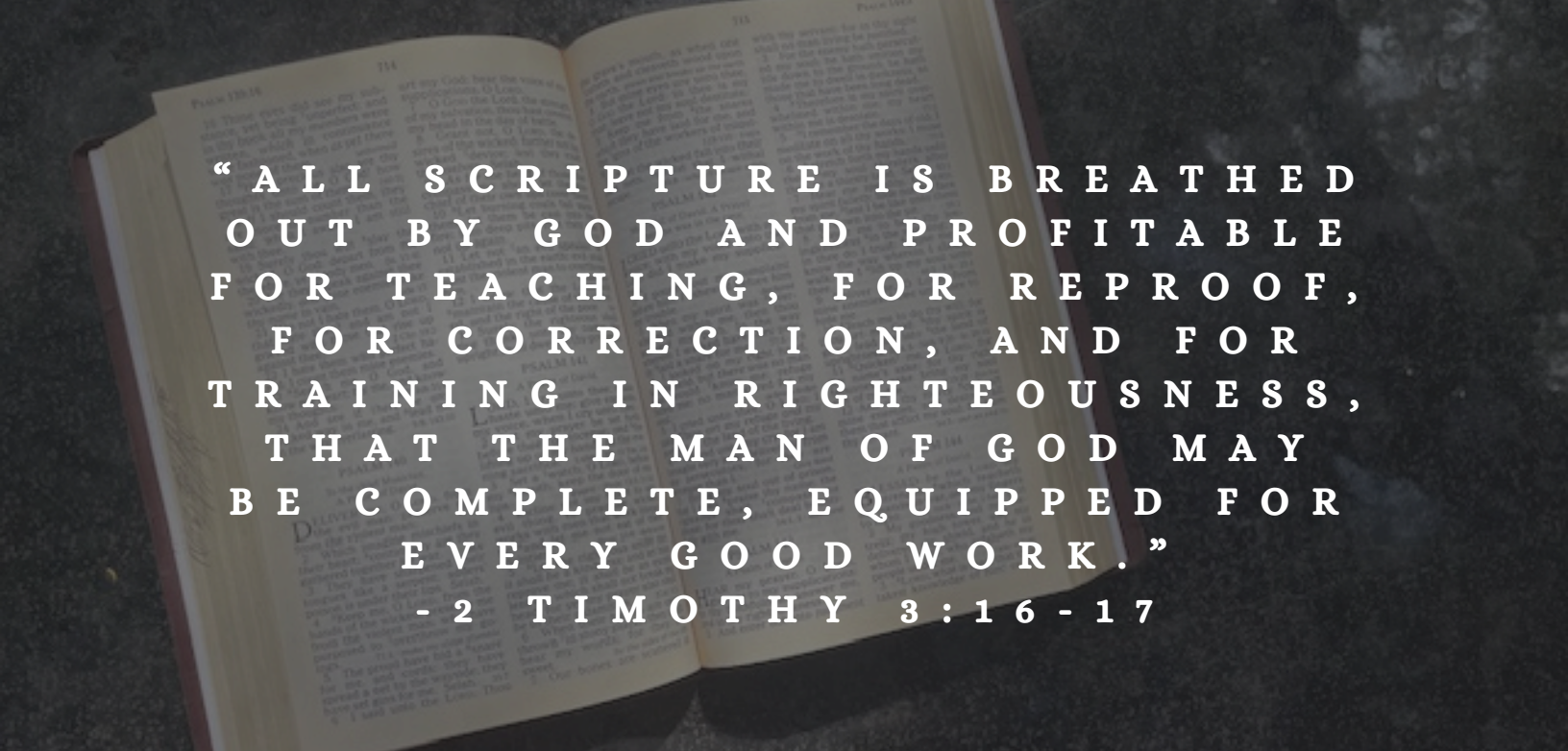


Knost translates the other rod verses in a similar fashion, replacing the words rod, child, and discipline accordingly. Knost argues that the Hebrew word for discipline (*musar*) in the first verse literally means “verbal instruction and teaching,” not punish, and that the Hebrew word for rod (*shebet*) is a “shepherd’s crook” denoting “wisdom, leadership, and protection,” not a tool for physical punishment, and the Hebrew word for child (*naar*) is “a male of independent age” or “a young man,” so she concludes that her translation above is more accurate.

In contrast, Flourishing Homes & Families acknowledges a literal rod used for beating in the Bible, but claims it was “used in the context of judicial punishment, not familial discipline.” They state that the *shebet* was a “violent weapon that was brutal enough to kill a person,” it was used “to beat a person nearly to death as a last resort before stoning a rebellious son (death penalty),” it would “leave bruises” and was only “applied to the back, not the bottom.” While they present an opposing perspective to Knost on the type of rod being used in these Proverbs, they agree with her that the *naar* was not a child, but rather a teen or young man who was no longer under the authority of his father. They go on to say that the “Proverbs speaks about using a rod on adults when they act foolishly” which they say raises the question: if you’re ok with spanking your children, then are you also ok with spanking, smacking, or swatting employees, church members, and wives?

(*Flourishing Homes & Families*, @flourishinghomesandfamilies, Instagram, Rod Verses Highlight, slides 27-32, June 28 and July 23, 2022.)⁴⁸





“ ALL SCRIPTURE IS BREATHED
OUT BY GOD AND PROFITABLE
FOR TEACHING, FOR REPROOF,
FOR CORRECTION, AND FOR
TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS,
THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY
BE COMPLETE, EQUIPPED FOR
EVERY GOOD WORK. ”
- 2 TIMOTHY 3 : 1 6 - 1 7

Before I unpack the rod verses, I want to remind you that as was prophesied in the Bible, these are the days where people are “always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7). The reality is that we live in a day where you can find someone with authority and experience to back up whatever view you already hold in your mind, and they can even point to verses to support those views.

I don't want to add my name to that list of people who tickle itching ears. So while I will unpack these verses with you and point out some flaws that I've found in both of the above views, I ask that you study the Scripture yourself and pray for God to give you wisdom.

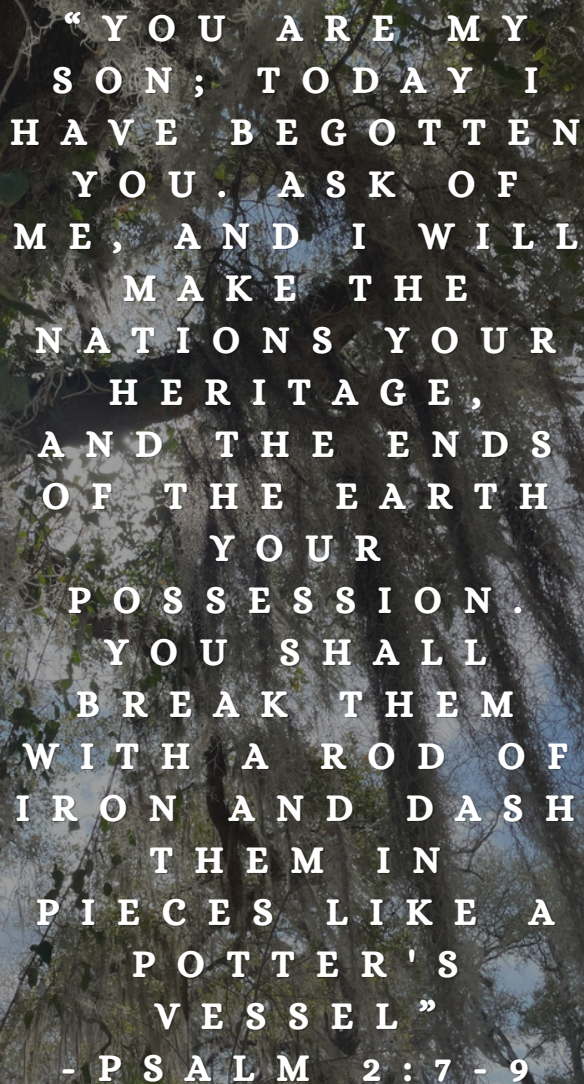
The same Holy Spirit that made the blind man see and the lame man walk dwells inside of every believer. You don't need a degree to read and understand Scripture. Knowledge doesn't begin with worldly wisdom, anecdotal experiences, college degrees, scientific studies, or modern psychology. It begins with the fear of the Lord and is made perfect by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture alone is sufficient.

Let's explore Knost's theory first: Is the rod merely a shepherd's staff? ⁴⁷

According to Strong's Concordance, the word *shebet* translates to a number of words, including correction, dart, rod, scepter, staff, tribe, stick, shaft, spear, and club. *Shebet* first appears in the Bible as "scepter", and most often appears as "tribe" - as in the twelve tribes of Israel, the family branches of the Abrahamic tree. ^{49,50}

"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the peoples."* -Genesis 49:10 (*Shiloh is a reference to the Messiah).



“ YOU ARE MY
SON; TODAY I
HAVE BEGOTTEN
YOU. ASK OF
ME, AND I WILL
MAKE THE
NATIONS YOUR
HERITAGE,
AND THE ENDS
OF THE EARTH
YOUR
POSSESSION.
YOU SHALL
BREAK THEM
WITH A ROD OF
IRON AND DASH
THEM IN
PIECES LIKE A
POTTER'S
VESSEL ”
- P S A L M 2 : 7 - 9

The scepter in the Bible represented authority ⁵¹ to govern one's own people within each family tribe. There is no record of a literal physical scepter being handled by a Jewish king, ⁵² so in this instance it is reasonable to interpret the scepter as figurative. This authority was passed down from father to son. A very incredible fulfillment of prophecy is seen when 12 year old Jesus appears teaching in the synagogue just a short while before the authority of Judah did in fact depart between 6-7 AD, ⁵³ yet the total completion of this prophecy won't happen until Jesus returns and the peoples gather to Him in obedience. When this happens, the scepter will be a rod of iron, speaking to the strength and permanence of Jesus' coming dominion (Revelation 2:26-27).

The next time *shebet* appears in the Bible, it is translated as “tribe” in reference to the twelve tribes of Israel (Genesis 49:16). This is the most used translation, with over one hundred occurrences. The Bible frequently refers to offspring using the language of trees, roots, branches, and vines, so the idea that the twelve sons of Jacob were branches from the root of Jacob and are therefore the twelve *branches* or *tribes* makes perfect sense. **The first and the two most frequent translations of *shebet* are tribe and scepter - authority that is firmly rooted in family.**

The first time *shebet* is translated as a “rod” used to strike another person is in Exodus 21. In fact, this section of Scripture outlines several violent scenarios with and without *shebet*, and how they were to respond to them judicially. If a man strikes another man, if a man strikes a woman or a servant, if the woman is pregnant and the baby dies, if the servant loses an eye or a tooth as a result, etc. These scenarios are in no way condoning, encouraging, or even instructing violence, but rather establishing a legal system for responding to instances of violence.



There are two verses where *shebet* is translated as a shepherd's staff or rod:

*“And every tithe of herds and flocks, every tenth animal of all that pass under the **herdsman's staff**, shall be holy to the Lord.”*

-Leviticus 27:32

*“The LORD is my **shepherd**; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; **Your rod** and Your staff, they comfort me.”*

-Psalm 23:1-4



Notice that in both of these verses, a shepherd is plainly identified, unlike in the Proverbs. Also notice that the Lord uses a figurative rod in Psalm 23, but it is figurative of a shepherd's literal rod. Keep that in mind as we look at another set of verses. (Also notice that the shepherd has both a rod [*shebet*] and a staff [*mish'edah*], two different instruments which served different purposes.)



The first time *shebet* is translated as a rod for a type of familial chastisement is not in Proverbs; it's actually in a prophecy given by Nathan to David, where God relates to David as a father who chastises with a rod.

“I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him...”

-2 Samuel 7:14-15

We see a similar familial disciplinary use in the Psalms:

“If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules, if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes, but I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness.”

-Psalm 89:30-33

The figurative rod that the Lord uses to discipline His children is figurative of the literal rod that a father uses. This, along with the absence of a shepherd figure, tells us that the rod in Proverbs is not merely figurative of a shepherd's staff. It is clearly a literal rod used for family discipline.

So what about the view presented by Flourishing Homes & Families? Does Scripture depict the rod being used on a wife or servant in an approving manner? Is the rod a lethal weapon meant to kill or leave a visible mark? Is the rod ever used for judicial punishment?⁴⁸

Let's look more closely at Exodus 21:20-21. Here is one example where the rod is used to strike a slave and the striking may or may not result in death:

*“When a man strikes his slave, male or female, with a **rod** and the slave dies under his hand, he shall be avenged. But if the slave survives a day or two, he is not to be avenged, for the slave is his money.”*

Another similar example of violence in this chapter is found in verses 26-27:

“When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and destroys it, he shall let the slave go free because of his eye. If he knocks out the tooth of his slave, male or female, he shall let the slave go free because of his tooth.”





So when a master strikes his slave, he is to be held accountable for those actions. If the slave dies, he is to be avenged. We see in verse 12 that the punishment for killing another man is death. If the slave is injured severely enough to leave a visible and lasting mark, he is to be freed. If he is injured enough to need rest to recover, the master will suffer the loss of time for his slave to recover, and the slave is to be given time to recover. Note that none of these verses are about husbands and wives, and these verses in no way condone or encourage violence, but rather offer a system of how to respond to violence in order to discourage it and to provide legal protection for victims of it.

It's clear that Scripture does not support the theory that the rod was meant to severely beat or kill any person, much less a servant or wife.

Was the *shebet* ever used for judicial punishment?

*“If there is a dispute between **men** and they come into **court** and the judges decide between them, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty, then if the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence with a number of stripes in proportion to his offense. Forty **stripes** may be given him, but not more, lest, if one should go on to beat him with more stripes than these, your brother be degraded in your sight.”*

-Deuteronomy 25:1-3

There is no verse in the entire Bible with *shebet* being used to enforce judicial punishment.

Not one.

Furthermore historical evidence⁵⁴ from the Jewish Virtual Library shows us that the judicial instrument used to administer stripes to grown men with disputes being resolved in the courts was in fact a “calfskin whip.”



The claim that the *shebet* in Proverbs was a judicial instrument meant to leave a mark on a teenage boy as a last resort before stoning him to death is a severe misinterpretation that is applying the wrong instrument to the wrong person in the wrong context.

There is one verse we should look at in Proverbs that discusses beating the backs of fools:

“Condemnation is ready for scoffers, and beating for the backs of fools.”

-Proverbs 19:29

Note that there is no instruction to husbands or masters with this verse either, nor is *shebet* mentioned. We often think of fools as harmless goofballs who maybe lack some common sense. It’s worth reading the entire book of Proverbs as it gives us the Biblical definition of what exactly a fool is:

A fool’s heart rages against the Lord when his ways lead him to ruin (19:3), he is slanderous (10:18), does not take sin seriously (10:23), rejects advice (12:15), is proud of his sin (13:16), is reckless and careless (14:16), despises his father’s instructions (15:5), and repeats the same mistakes over and over (26:11). It’s clear that to be considered a fool, you would have broken many laws and caused many problems that warranted the stripes prescribed in Deuteronomy 25.



The rod of discipline was a family tool used to teach, train, and correct children to prepare them for being an adult where they would face an even harsher measure of punishment should they refuse to walk in the ways of the Lord.

What about the Hebrew words for child and son? Do they translate to a “young man outside his father’s authority?”

The first rod verse in Proverbs 13:24 refers to *benow*, the Hebrew word for “son.”⁵⁵

*“Whoever spares the rod hates his **son**, but he who loves him *is **diligent** to discipline him.” *or “disciplines him **early**.”*

The Hebrew word being translated as “diligent” or “early” is *shachar* and according to Strong’s Concordance⁵⁶ it means “to look early or diligently for.” The first uses in the Bible are in reference to seeking early in the morning. It appears that in the context of discipline that fathers should diligently seek to discipline their sons early on, as in the first time the son demonstrates iniquity. Contextually speaking, **if a father is still in a position to be disciplining his son, does that not imply that the son is still under the authority of his father?**

The first time *benow* appears in the Bible is in Genesis 3:16:

*“To the woman he said, ‘I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth **children**.’”*

This is clearly in reference to newborn babies, both male and female, from the moment they exit the womb and enter the world.



The Hebrew word in the remaining rod verses translated as “child” is *naar*, which has a variety of meanings including youth, babe, young man, lad, and servant.⁴⁰ Although it is most often translated as servant or young man, here is a thorough (though not exhaustive) list of examples of *naar* being translated as someone clearly younger than a young man, and the context gives no indication that these babies and children were outside their father’s authority.

- 1 Samuel 20:35-38 as “little boy” of the age to fetch arrows.
- Judges 13:7 as baby, boy, and child, referring to Samson’s birth.
- Exodus 2:6 as infant, baby Moses.
- 1 Samuel 1:22-27 as a young child before weaning, and one who has just been weaned.
- 1 Samuel 2:18 as a boy in a little robe with his mother and father and continuing in 1 Samuel 2:21-26, 3:1 that same boy/child as he grows through adolescence, referring to Samuel.
- 2 Samuel 12:16 as the young child that David had with Bathsheba, referred to as another Hebrew word for young child the remaining times: *yeled*.
- 1 Kings 14:3, 17 as child regarding Jeroboam’s sick son, also referred to as *yeled*.
- 2 Kings 4:29-35 as child regarding the Shanummite’s son, also referred to as *yeled*.
- 2 Kings 5:14 like the flesh of a little child that quickly heals.
- Hosea 11:1 as child, figuratively Israel, literally Jesus, when called out of Egypt, therefore at least younger than 12 years old as Jesus was in Jerusalem by that age (Luke 2:42).
- Isaiah 7:14-16 as a young child eating curds and honey before he knows how to choose the good and refuse the bad.
- Isaiah 8:4 as a young child before they know how to cry out “mama” and “papa.”
- Isaiah 10:19 as a little child at the age where they can only count few numbers.
- Isaiah 11:6 as the little child leading the animals in the millennial kingdom.

- Deuteronomy 28:50 as “the young” with implications that it is inclusive of the youngest as it is in contrast to “the elderly” in terms of how the nation mistreats these two most fragile categories of people.
- Genesis 19:4, Joshua 6:21, and Esther 3:13 as “young” in contrast to “old” in the context of describing “all the people, both young and old,” and in Esther 3:13 it further defines “young” to specifically include little children.

Naar is not exclusive of any age within youth, and as we saw from the list above, it has nothing to do with no longer being under a father’s authority. While *naar* is masculine by default, many things in Hebrew apply to both men and women unless the women are specifically excluded.

If *naar* doesn’t indicate an age or gender necessarily, how do we define it appropriately in the Proverbs? In defining the word *naar*, what we want to try and identify is something that is always true.

Naar doesn’t always describe a specific age within “youth,” but it does always describe a young person who is “in training,” like an apprentice.⁷⁵

A king in training, a child in training, a soldier in training, the female variant for an unmarried woman in training to be a wife, a baby or a toddler in training to talk and to count and to choose between good and bad.

Joshua was a young man in training under Moses. Solomon was in training to be king. Baby Samson was in training to be judge. Jesus, before he knew how to choose the good and refuse the bad was in training under his earthly father Joseph.

We can better identify the *naar* subject in the Proverbs by identifying the relationship to the person giving the training and the context of the situation.

Proverbs 29:15-17 and Proverbs 13:24 clearly show a parent disciplining their child without any indication of one specific age within youth. Since we now understand that *shebet* was exclusively a family instrument and was never used for judicial punishment, we can conclude that Proverbs 22:15 and Proverbs 23:13-14 are also in the context of family discipline.

So what kind of rod was the *shebet* when used for family discipline?

There are other Hebrew words for different kinds of sticks in Scripture:

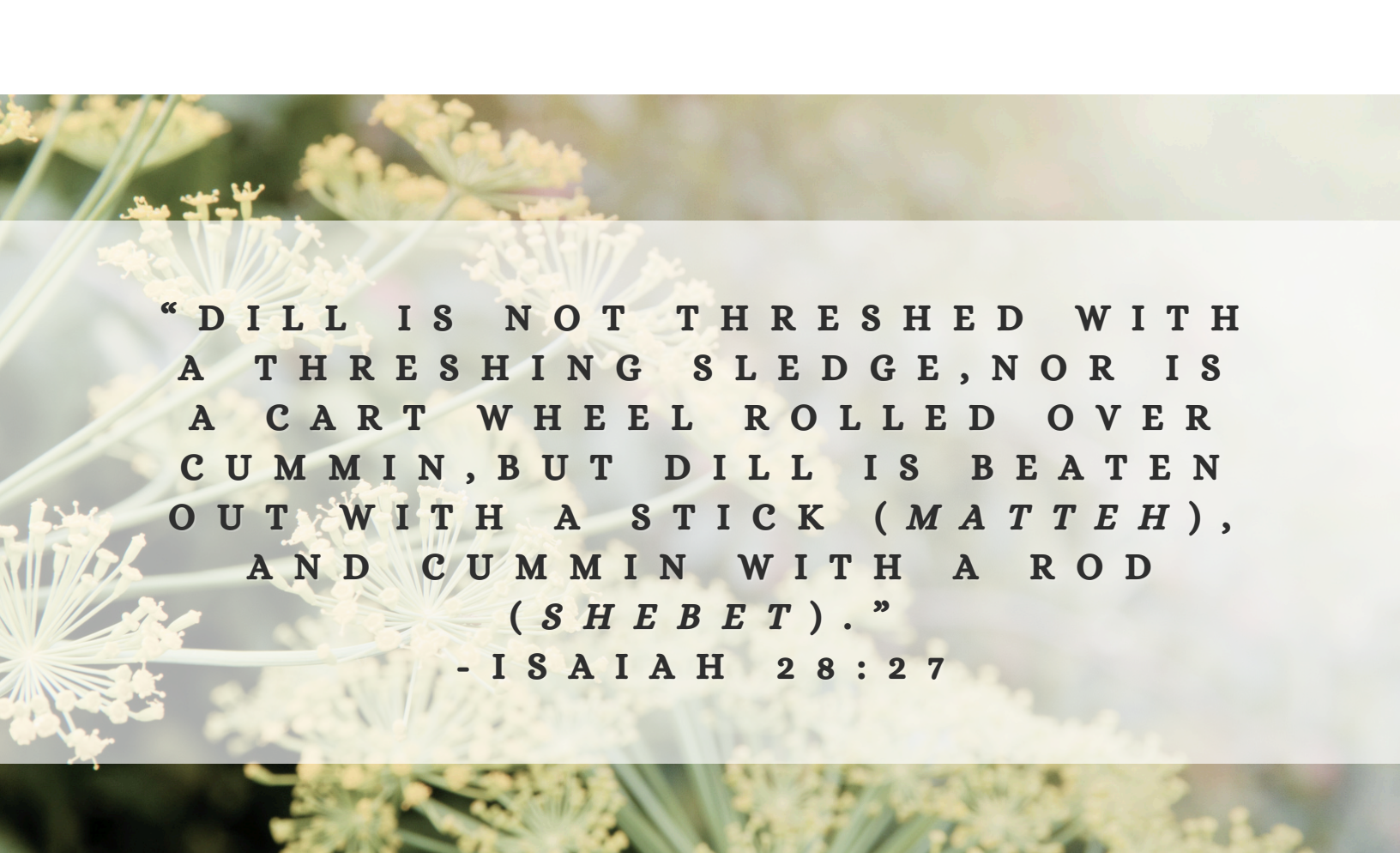
*Mish'enah*⁵⁷ is used 12 times and means “support staff”, so this particular kind of stick would be able to support the weight of a full grown man. *Maqqel* or *maqqelah*⁵⁸ is another rod or staff always translated in a similar way.

Then there is *matteh*⁵⁹. Like *shebet*, *matteh* is also most often translated as branch, tribe, and scepter. It is also referred to as a “rod of punishment” in Isaiah 30:32 (and Habakkuk 3:9 in the NAS version). They are truly synonymous.

The root verb for *matteh* is *natah*⁶⁰, meaning to stretch out or extend, which gives the connotation that the *matteh* was like an extension of one’s hand.

Although there is no root verb for *shebet*¹¹⁰, since *shebet* and *matteh* are used synonymously with one another throughout Scripture, it’s reasonable to believe they both held that same connotation.

And there’s one verse in particular that clues us in to the size of both the *shebet* and the *matteh* found in Isaiah.

A close-up photograph of dill and cummin flowers. The dill flowers are in the foreground, showing their characteristic feathery structure and small yellow blossoms. The cummin flowers are in the background, also showing their feathery structure and small yellow blossoms. The background is softly blurred.

“ D I L L I S N O T T H R E S H E D W I T H
A T H R E S H I N G S L E D G E , N O R I S
A C A R T W H E E L R O L L E D O V E R
C U M M I N , B U T D I L L I S B E A T E N
O U T W I T H A S T I C K (M A T T E H) ,
A N D C U M M I N W I T H A R O D
(S H E B E T) . ”

- I S A I A H 2 8 : 2 7

According to several commentaries, there were a number of threshing tools used for different types of grain. When harvesting the seeds from dill or cummin, because they are more delicate, “it is enough to beat or tap them with the ‘rod,’ or ‘staff’... Interpreting this parable, we may see in the [dill] and the cummin the little ones of the earth, with whom God deals more gently than with the strong” (*Elliott’s Commentary for English Readers*).^{252, 253}

***Shebet* and *matteh* are smaller sticks, not large staffs, like the extension of one’s hand, rooted in family, and representing authority and discipline of one’s own people.**

And just like any tool, while it could be used to seriously injure (and I do not in any way wish to diminish the harm that some parents have caused their children in this area), I point back to Exodus 21 as a reminder that the *shebet* and *matteh* were never intended to be used to injure anyone, especially a child.

What about the word for strike?

Does the Hebrew word for strike give us any indication for the amount of force to be used in family discipline? The Hebrew word for strike used in Proverbs 23:13-14 is *nakah*. According to strong's concordance it means to smite.⁶¹ When it is used in the Bible, it most often results in serious injury or death. So how can we reconcile this with the fact that the verse explicitly says that striking a child with the *shebet* will NOT kill? With the force of *nakah*, if one were to strike a teenager, it could be lethal with the right instrument. And Exodus 21 tells us that even to leave a lasting mark would be wrong.


There are two instances in the Bible where *nakah* is translated as clapping hands (2 Kings 11:12, Ezekiel 22:13, and Ezekiel 21:19-22 in the NASB translation). One possible translation of this verse would be to understand *nakah* as using the force of clapping one's hands. This also fits with the idea that the *shebet* was synonymous with *matteh* as the extension of one's hand.

Another possible translation of this verse would be to interpret it as an idiom, that the *shebet* was so innocuous that even if one were to strike with a mighty blow, if they were using a mere *shebet*, it would not kill. This also fits with the understanding that *shebet* was a small stick.

In order for this verse itself to remain factually accurate, either the force of striking must be tempered with the love and nurture that accompanies familial discipline, or the *shebet* needs to be so small and harmless that it would only bring a brief pain like a stinging sensation even if it were used with a lot of force, or both. It should be the kind of pain we read about in Hebrews 12, the kind that only lasts for the moment.

The Rod of Discipline...

Now we know the rod of discipline is not merely a shepherd's staff for guiding, it's also not a lethal weapon meant to leave a mark on a young man outside his father's authority, nor is it for judicial punishment. But even using a small stick or our hand to punish our children of all ages... many parents struggle to embrace this Biblical teaching because we simply don't enjoy it. It brings every loving parent sorrow! How do we reconcile the conflict we feel as parents around this idea of punishing our children in this way?



" SAY TO THEM, AS I LIVE,
DECLARES THE LORD GOD, I
HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THE
DEATH OF THE WICKED, BUT
THAT THE WICKED TURN FROM
HIS WAY AND LIVE; TURN
BACK, TURN BACK FROM YOUR
EVIL WAYS, FOR WHY WILL YOU
DIE, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL? "
- EZEKIEL 33:11

We can take comfort in knowing that our heavenly Father feels the same pain we do.

Is the rod of correction the *only* Biblical form of familial discipline?

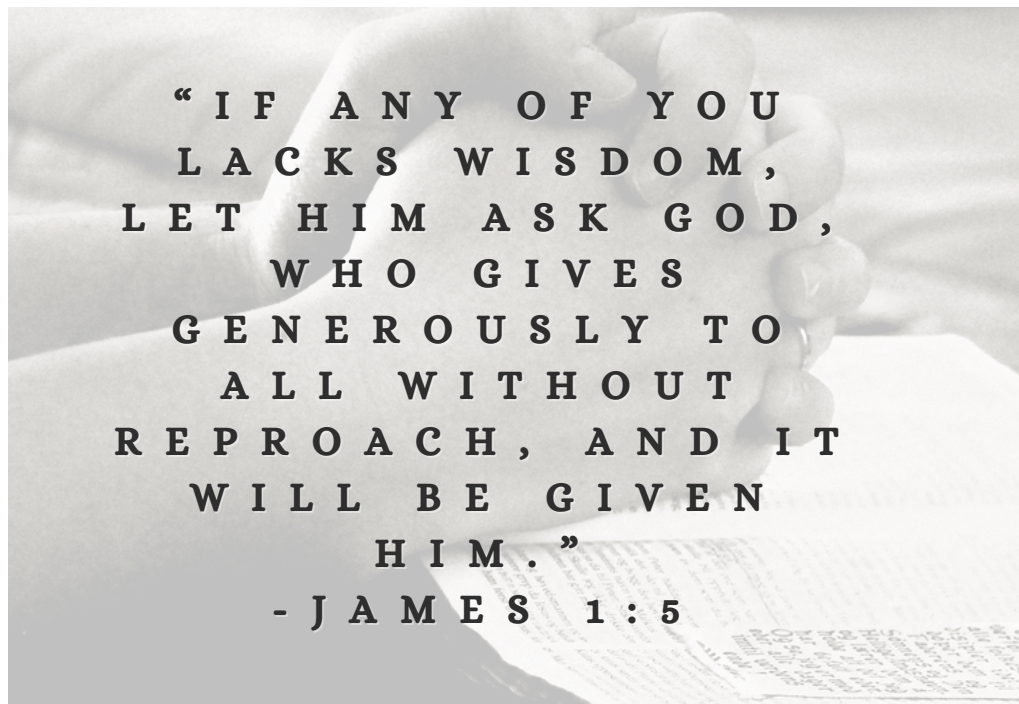
Why do we box ourselves in like this? Friends, lay down this burden, it is not of the Lord. Our Father is merciful and gracious. He knows your heart and your past. If there was physical abuse, He brings healing. If your child has an extremely gentle and sensitive temperament, He brings discernment. If you're a foster parent beholden to laws, if your spouse is not in agreement with you... **He knows and He cares for you.**

The Lord used a variety of disciplinary styles throughout the Bible. He is our perfect example, our Abba Father.

God used both natural (1 Samuel 8) **and supernatural consequences** (Acts 5:1-11). **He reasoned** (Isaiah 1:18), **used the rod of men** (2 Samuel 7:14), **and the rod of His mouth**

(Isaiah 11:4). **He said if His children repent, then He will relent of the punishment** (Jeremiah 18:8, 26:3, Jonah 3), **but there comes a point where time runs out to choose repentance. He is patient and slow to anger** (Psalm 145:8), **but will not withhold punishment when we ignore His warnings** (Ezekiel 7:4), **yet in His punishment He does not remove His steadfast love** (Psalm 89:33).

Just like Israel, each of our different children needs different things at different times.



SECTION 4 - REWARDS & PUNISHMENTS

Another common belief among Christian Gentle Parenting influencers is that rewards and punishments don't work, or at least they don't work in the way you want them to. Michelle Manning-Osborn⁶² is a popular parenting coach on Instagram (@conscious.hippie.mama) and she is unashamedly against any form of punishment. She claims in one of her reels that when you think your punishments are working because it has put a stop to unfavorable behavior, your children are “not stopping because intrinsically their morals tell them not to do it. It's strictly to avoid the punishment.” (*Did you Know You Can Effectively Teach Without Using Punishment?*)⁶³

Flourishing Homes and Families also discusses intrinsic motivation in their blog titled *What's The Difference Between Punishment and Discipline* stating that the aim is to “empower, equip, and encourage children to do the right thing because it is the right thing, not because they are scared of the consequences” but rather because they “understand another's perspective and genuinely want to do the right thing.” They say it is a “long term goal” to cultivate “within a child intrinsic motivation to act with charity, generosity, compassion, courage, kindness, and empathy because it is the right thing to do.”¹¹¹



First, let's define "Intrinsic Motivation."

The leading experts in the field of Intrinsic Motivation are Richard M. Ryan Ph.D.¹¹² and Edward L. Deci, Ph.D.¹¹³ Ryan is a Professor at the Institute for Positive Psychology & Education at Australian Catholic University, North Sydney and Professor Emeritus in Psychology at the University of Rochester. He is a clinical psychologist and the co-developer of Self-Determination Theory with Deci. Together they have collaborated on several studies and papers that have formed today's foundational understanding of human motivation in modern psychology. In their paper *Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions*, they define Intrinsic Motivation as:

"the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards." (Page 56.)¹¹⁴

They discuss how there are two basic theories about intrinsic motivation: "Operant Theory (Skinner, 1953)" which maintains that "all behaviors are motivated by rewards," therefore with intrinsic motivation, the reward is found within the activity itself, and "Learning Theory (Hull, 1943)" which asserts that "all behaviors are motivated by physiological drives," therefore with intrinsic motivation, the activities provide "satisfaction of innate physiological needs" (Page 57).¹¹⁴

The idea being that people are motivated by the satisfaction or the naturally occurring reward that they experience. For example, someone may be intrinsically motivated to exercise because of the satisfaction they feel while working out whereas someone else may be intrinsically motivated to exercise because of the rewarding results of weight loss and health benefits. In both cases, the intrinsic motivation is not to exercise because of a sense of morality found within one's self, the motivation is driven by a positive feeling or consequence that naturally accompanies the activity.

On the flip side, as I mentioned in Ch, 2, Dr. Baumrind pointed out with the example of children sneaking sweets or hitting a younger sibling that there are also negative behaviors that we may be intrinsically motivated to do, such as binge-watching late-night T.V., eating in excess, stealing, or exacting our own revenge.²⁵

Ryan and Deci state that “extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation” and “it is critical to remember that intrinsic motivation will occur only for activities that hold intrinsic interest for an individual—those that have the appeal of novelty, challenge, or aesthetic value for that individual” (page 59-60).¹¹⁴

For example, in a structured grade school setting, children may be required to learn specific subjects for their age and are motivated to do so extrinsically by the teacher through a grading system, whereas in an unstructured autonomous learning environment, they may be free to explore the subject matter that is of interest to them regardless of their age and may develop intrinsic motivation to read, write, or study. In this case, extrinsic rewards may disrupt the child’s natural desire to learn, so intrinsic motivation is best.

Whereas in the matter of sneaking sweets, children would be intrinsically motivated to take the sweet because they enjoy the experience and reward of

eating it. So to disrupt their natural desire to take and eat a sweet treat when they ought not to, parents would need to establish an extrinsic motivation such as creating a reward or punishment for such behavior. That way the child will choose the extrinsic motivation over the intrinsic motivation and begin to develop self-control.



Is intrinsic morality a Biblical concept?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches that *“when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”* -Matthew 6:2-4.

Here, Jesus shows that giving in front of others comes with its own reward. The motivation for giving is the reward that occurs when people praise you for it. But Christians are called to give in secret and abstain from receiving the temporary reward of man’s praise and instead seek to receive the reward that our Father in Heaven will give to us.

While doing the right thing often has its own reward or satisfaction, when the Lord tells us we should abstain from the natural rewards or do things that have no natural rewards, He promises us heavenly rewards that we should rejoice and be glad in. We cannot rely upon intrinsic motivation as our driving force - not every command we are given as Christians is enjoyable.

Gentle Parenting claims that intrinsic motivation is the desire to do something because of our own inner source of morality, whereas the real definition of intrinsic motivation is the desire to do something because it is naturally rewarding or enjoyable. ^{63, 111}

Ultimately, morality and godliness do not spring up from our own internal faculties. **The theological belief held by these Christian Gentle Parenting influencers that the source of morality is within us is a form of self-worship.** It’s a belief that reasoning and empathy lead to our own goodness and light. It’s a belief that we needn’t look any further than our own selves to tap into pure love and unadulterated motivation for godliness. It’s a belief that denies our sin nature and discounts God’s promised rewards for obedience.

We cannot be our own source of godliness. We need Jesus.

As we pointed out in Section 1, both L.R. Knost and Flourishing Homes & Families claimed that rewards and punishments didn't even work in the Bible.^{38, 39}

Did God use a bad parenting method that did not work?

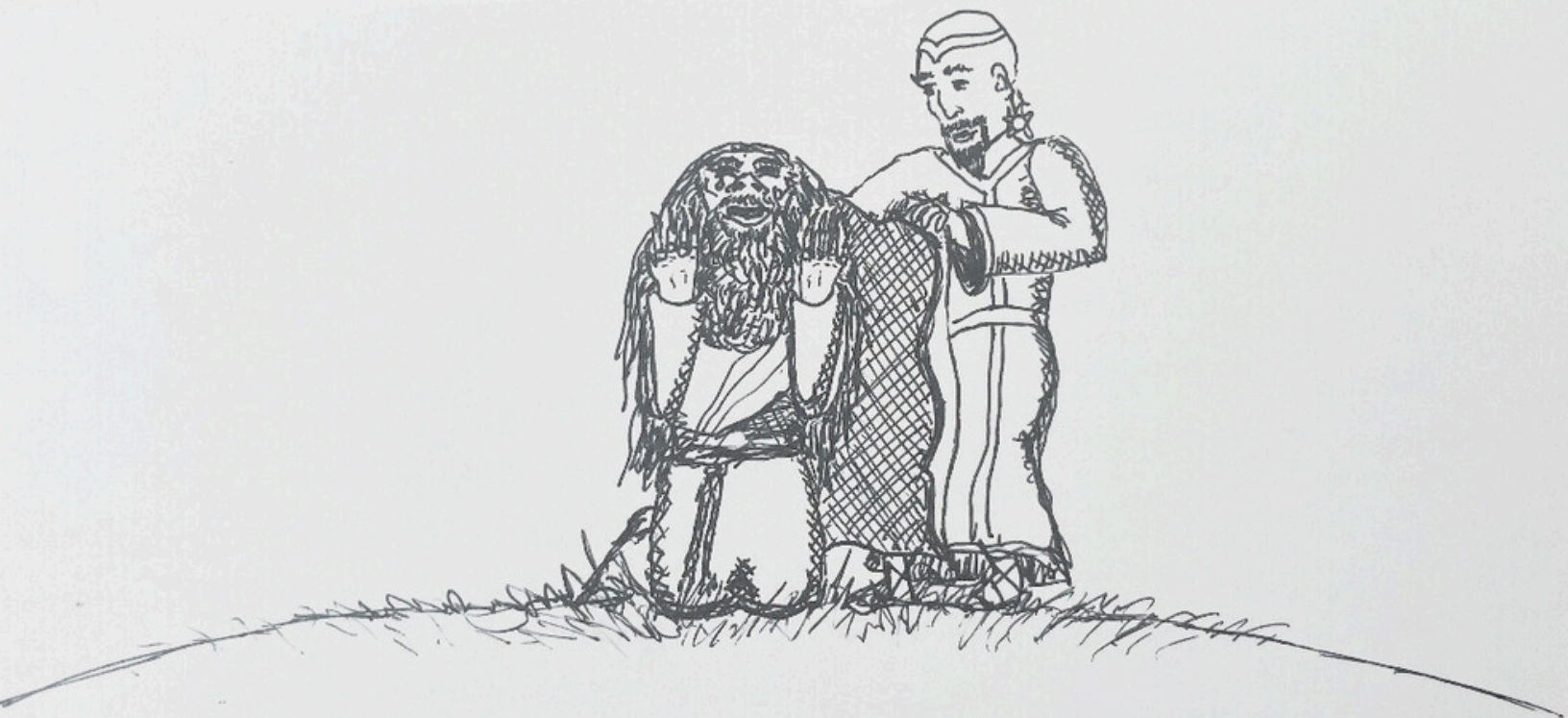
“You shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. You shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and you shall be wet with the dew of heaven, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.” -Daniel 4:24-25



20

Nebuchadnezzar was given a dream to warn him what would happen to him if he did not repent. But he did not listen. And sure enough, the Lord caused him to live like a beast for seven years to punish him. Did it work to correct both his behavior and his heart?

*“At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored Him who lives forever, for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation; all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and He does according to His will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand or say to Him, “What have you done?” At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me. My counselors and my lords sought me, and I was established in my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. **Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all His works are right and His ways are just; and those who walk in pride He is able to humble.**” -Daniel 4:34-37*



Nebuchadnezzar's heart and behavior were both changed through the rewards and punishments of the Lord. It worked for him. And while the nation of Israel as a whole was largely disobedient under the law, there were many individuals whose hearts were turned towards the Lord under this system, experiencing or witnessing first-hand the Lord's rewards and punishments. These were people who did not lose faith - who both feared and loved the Lord. Noah, Abraham, Lot, Moses, David, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel... There is no Biblical argument to claim these people only obeyed God out of their own pure intrinsic motives, nor that their hearts were not sincerely turned toward the Lord and that they were merely obeying out of fear without love. David, a man after God's own heart, the one who penned hundreds of our worship songs to the Lord, who experienced both the severe punishments with the deaths of four of his sons, and the abundant earthly rewards of the Lord through his mighty kingdom, loved Him and feared Him at the same time (2 Samuel 12, Psalm 5:7, 26:8, and 116:1).

What about the New Testament? Did God stop using rewards and punishments with Jesus on the cross? Should we now obey only out of love for God without any fear of Him?

In the Flourishing Homes and Families' Punish/Rewards Highlight on Instagram, Amanda Erickson refers to the following verse as an example of why we know that God blesses everyone in the Bible without condition, both the just and the unjust: "*For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*" -Matthew 5:45

She proceeds to equate the Lord blessing everyone with rain for cultivation with the Lord's rewards, saying, "*Are blessings (rewards) in the Bible? Yes they are. Do they work? No they don't. And they aren't the motivator that Jesus gives us to follow His commands.*" She then refers to John 14:15 where Jesus says to His disciples, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" and then **she says that to obey God because we hope for a reward from Him or want to avoid a punishment from Him is "not true obedience."**³⁸ I don't think the repentant king of Nineveh would agree with this deduction (Jonah 3:6-10).

When we look at the text surrounding the verse in Matthew 5, we see Jesus repeatedly referencing rewards from God as motivation for godly conduct:

*“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.**”* -Matthew 5:11-12

Here Jesus tells us to rejoice and be glad for our rewards, so being motivated by rewards to obey cannot mean it is not true obedience.

“For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?”
-Matthew 5:46

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.” -Matthew 6:1

“But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”
-Matthew 6:3-4

“But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.” -Matthew 6:6

“But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”
-Matthew 6:17-18

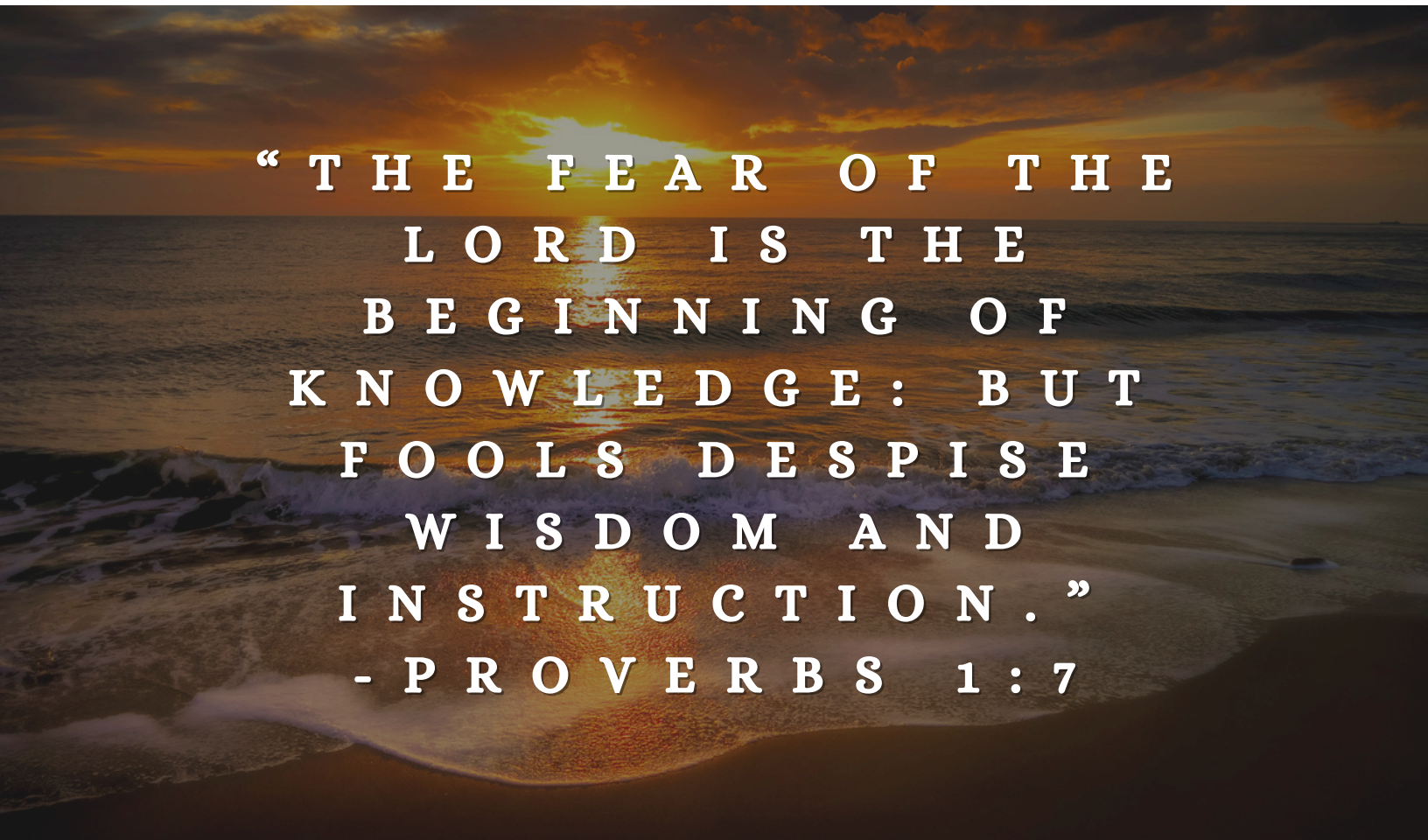
Clearly Jesus teaches that God still uses rewards.

What about punishments? Should we still fear the Lord for what He can do, or is the “fear” of the Lord merely reverence and honor?

“But I will warn you whom to fear: fear Him who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear Him!”

-Luke 12:5

If we ought to fear Him because He has the authority to cast us into Hell after we’ve died, it cannot merely be a feeling of reverence and respect that this fear is referring to. It is to truly be afraid of what the Lord can and will do to those who reject His Son Jesus.



**“ THE FEAR OF THE
LORD IS THE
BEGINNING OF
KNOWLEDGE: BUT
FOOLS DESPISE
WISDOM AND
INSTRUCTION.”
- PROVERBS 1:7**

There is a rarely talked about example of punishment being doled out by the Lord in a supernatural way in the New Testament after Jesus had been resurrected. It takes place in the early church. Acts chapter 4 tells us that the believers were selling all that they had and laying all the proceeds down at the feet of the apostles who in turn distributed it to each as any had need and there was no one found among them who was in need.

But chapter 5 tells us that two among them were dishonest.

*“But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? **You have not lied to man but to God.” When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it.** The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter said to her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much.” And she said, “Yes, for so much.” But Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” **Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last.** When the young men came in they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. **And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.”***

-Acts 5:1-11

What can wash away my sin?

Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Too many have fallen prey to a false teaching of all grace and no truth. One that teaches a version of Jesus who would never have struck down Ananias' and Sapphira's flesh. But here we are reminded of our need to continue to fear the Lord (and we see how sin is against God rather than man, something we will explore in more depth later in this section).

Justification and Sanctification.

Once we receive the gift of salvation by faith, we are justified and our eternity in Heaven is sealed (Romans 5:1, Ephesians 1:12-14). We can rest assured that if we are saved, nothing can take us out of our Father's hand (John 10:27-29). And because God loves us, He will continue to discipline and train us in holiness and righteousness (Hebrews 12:5-11). Then there are heavenly rewards in the form of crowns for developing discipline (1 Corinthians 9:25-27), for effectively sharing the gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:19, Philippians 4:1), for loving His appearing (2 Timothy 4:8), for enduring persecution (James 1:12, Revelation 2:10), and for being a faithful shepherd (1 Peter 5:1-4), and our due reward will be judged by our deeds, both good and evil (2 Corinthians 5:9-10).

The gift of salvation is freely offered to all, but only those who accept it will receive it. **If our children don't understand that they are sinful, then they'll never understand why they need Jesus.**

Our children need to understand that they are not merely underdeveloped little humans with the ability to cultivate intrinsically pure motives on their own as their brains fully develop so long as we the parents make sure they feel safe and secure. This is a false gospel at the core of Gentle Parenting.

Our children need to know that they are sinful from birth, that the wages of sin is death, and not just a physical death, but an eternal death with torment both day and night, and that the only way to the Father in Heaven is through faith alone in Jesus alone.

I'd like to share the testimony of my first-born son. When the Covid lockdowns began and our church shut down, we began reading the Bible together at home for the first time. We had been largely relying on the kid's program at church and it really opened our eyes to just how important it is that our children hear



the Word of God from us every single day. We tossed out their cartoon kid's Bibles and I opened up my phone's Bible app to Exodus and read to them about Moses and the plagues on Egypt. I was astonished at the details I had been missing while allowing this story to be watered down in the Sunday school and their cartoon versions. We began studying a different chapter together almost every day. My children heard the gospel from my husband and I regularly as we began turning to Scripture for even basic decisions.

When my son was 7 years old, he disobeyed one of our long standing rules while playing with our neighbor friends. His punishment was being grounded from playing for the rest of the day. It was especially sad because we were moving the next day, so this would have been his last chance to play with them as neighbors. He went to his room to think about what he had done. After some time, he came out to talk to us, tears in his eyes, and said:

“Mama I’m so sorry I did that, I know it was wrong, and I’m really sorry. I won’t do it again, I understand why it was wrong now.” He then turned and went back to his room. It was the first time we had ever seen clear and true repentance in him. In the past, he had always tried to minimize what he had done, justify it, reduce his punishment, or blame someone else. Not this time. This time he truly repented without any expectations or hope for the punishment to be removed. My husband and I immediately turned to the Scripture. I had been studying Jeremiah at the time and these verses instantly came to mind:

*“If they repent...
I will relent.”*

"IF AT ANY TIME I DECLARE
CONCERNING A NATION OR A
KINGDOM, THAT I WILL PLUCK
UP AND BREAK DOWN AND
DESTROY IT, AND IF THAT
NATION, CONCERNING WHICH I
HAVE SPOKEN, TURNS FROM ITS
EVIL, I WILL RELENT OF THE
DISASTER THAT I INTENDED TO
DO TO IT."

- JEREMIAH 18:7-8

After a long conversation and prayer, my husband and I agreed that in this instance, we felt led to follow God's example in Jeremiah and relent of his punishment. We asked our son to come back and talk with us and read to him from Jeremiah. We taught him about how Israel had been walking in sin for a very long time, and God had continued to warn them, but that if they would just repent, he would relent. So because we had seen him repent, we wanted to follow God's example and show him mercy by removing the punishment. But we also turned to Leviticus 26 and showed him God would multiply their punishment sevenfold if Israel continued in willful disobedience without repentance. We also turned to 1 Samuel 13-15 and told him the story of king Saul who demonstrated false repentance. We let him know that while we won't always be able to tell the difference, that as we are merely people and not like God, we will make mistakes sometimes, but God knows his heart, knows his every thought, and will always know if he's truly repentant. And God is our perfect Father who knows how to discipline us for our good.

A few days later, we were in the car on a long drive and my son spoke up and said: "*Mama, I know Jesus is real and He really is God and if He hadn't died on the cross for me, I wouldn't have life. I really know that now. I know it's true.*" And he truly hasn't been the same ever since. He has a sincere spirit of continual repentance. He is quick to apologize, actively seeks ways to overcome his temptations, prays earnestly about it, and even shared the gospel with his younger brother one night as they were winding down for bed. A few months later he asked to be baptized at our new church and boldly professed his faith in Jesus before our whole church.

God the Father, Jesus the Son



With regards to non-punitive parenting, Flourishing Homes and Families says in an Instagram post titled⁶⁴ *Parenting Without Punishment Isn't Permissive* that “Jesus confronted, corrected, rebuked, and addressed sin. But He never punished His disciples or followers.” L.R. Knost says, “And so we have Jesus... the perfect Parent to model ourselves after.” (*Jesus, The Gentle Parent*, Page 11.)³⁹ This is a very common philosophy among Christian Gentle Parents, to model your parenting after Jesus.⁶⁵

Many Gentle Parents point to Galatians 6:1 for guidance on how to handle your children's sin: “*Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.*”⁶⁶

The first problem with this application of the Scripture is that it is referring to how brothers and sisters in Christ ought to restore someone in the church who is caught up in sin. It's not referring to how parents should train up their children in the way that they should go.

We see in 1 Timothy 3:4-5 that the bar is set pretty high at least for church leaders and their children: “*He must manage his own household well, with all dignity **keeping his children submissive**, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?*”

The second problem is that this interpretation removes God as the Father figure and replaces Him with the Son. Of course Jesus didn't punish anyone during His ministry on earth. He is the Son, our elder Brother (Romans 8:29). He is our example for how we ought to submit to the Father.

In their “Sin highlight” on Instagram, Dr. David and Amanda Erickson of Flourishing Homes & Families address a question on how they discuss sin with their own children. In their video, Dr. David talks about how because they believe “it’s very difficult to introduce an idea like ‘you sinned against God, this being you’ve never seen,’” they instead talk about sin in “a more horizontal term, as in sin is something that people do to one another” and then point “them towards the need to reconcile.” Amanda expresses her desire for their children “to choose to love God because of His goodness... and not because they are afraid of punishment for sin.”⁶⁷ While they do acknowledge sin is against God, they wait to teach that concept when their children are older. They discuss the complexity of the topic of sin nature and childhood brain development, graciously leaving room for people to have different opinions on this admittedly complicated theological concept. However, their teaching builds a foundational understanding of sin to be against others first and foremost, and the response to sin being to reconcile with one another in order to have **right human relations**.



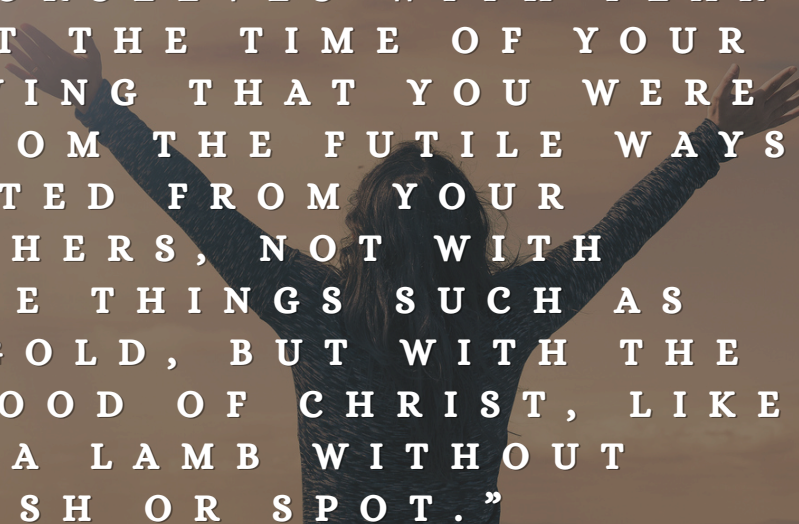
What makes sin *sin*?

King David’s son was taken by the Lord as a punishment for David taking Uriah’s wife Bathsheba and then sending Uriah to his death. David says to the Lord “against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight” in Psalm 51:4. The focus is not on Uriah or Bathsheba. And while it’s true he did sin against them both, what makes it sin is not because of how it hurt someone else. It is sin because it was evil in the eyes of the Lord, and therefore was a sin against God and God only.

It's important for children to understand from the very beginning that just like Ananias, Sapphira, and King David, the sins they commit are against God and God only.

Training and correcting do not save our children or atone for their sin, only Jesus can do that. But it helps them understand that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), and that part of God's goodness is that He is just (Deuteronomy 32:4) and there can be no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood (Hebrews 9:22). If they don't understand that, they are missing a fundamental part of why they need the Savior, of why His blood needed to be shed, and why the gift of God is truly so amazing!

We are commanded to reconcile with one another, especially before acts of worship (Matthew 5:23-24), but being reconciled to one another is not a prerequisite for being reconciled to God. The reason we can have love for one another is because He first loved us (1 John 4:19-21). Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, and we are saved by faith alone (Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:8-9).



“ AND IF YOU CALL ON HIM AS FATHER WHO JUDGES IMPARTIALLY ACCORDING TO EACH ONE'S DEEDS, CONDUCT YOURSELVES WITH FEAR THROUGHOUT THE TIME OF YOUR EXILE, KNOWING THAT YOU WERE RANSOMED FROM THE FUTILE WAYS INHERITED FROM YOUR FOREFATHERS, NOT WITH PERISHABLE THINGS SUCH AS SILVER OR GOLD, BUT WITH THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST, LIKE THAT OF A LAMB WITHOUT BLEMISH OR SPOT.”

- 1 P E T E R 1 : 1 7 - 1 9

Even under the covenant of the law, Abraham was counted righteous because of His faith (Romans 4:3). Jesus is the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). He was not sent to replace a broken system, He was always God's plan for redemption.

If righteousness is by faith, what was the purpose of the law?

“ T H E R E F O R E T H E L A W W A S O U R
T U T O R T O B R I N G U S T O C H R I S T ,
T H A T W E M I G H T B E J U S T I F I E D
B Y F A I T H . B U T A F T E R F A I T H
H A S C O M E , W E A R E N O L O N G E R
U N D E R A T U T O R . ”

- G A L A T I A N S 3 : 2 4 - 2 6


Similarly we guide and tutor our children until their faith comes in. We can't save our children with rewards and punishments. But we can train them up in the way they should go (Proverbs 22:6).

The law was not a broken system or a bad parenting style. It reveals sin to be sin and was the precursor to grace (Romans 7:13, John 1:17).

SECTION 5 - FACTS & FEELINGS

The last core tenant of Gentle Parenting that we will address in this chapter is “Affirming Your Child’s Emotions.” Many people associate Gentle Parenting with lying on the floor with your child and saying things like “I am with you, you are safe, feelings are hard” while they throw a temper tantrum,^{68, 69} but that is NOT something adopted by the vast majority of Gentle Parenting influencers today. Most influencers make it clear that there’s a difference between tolerating behavior that crosses your boundaries and creating a safe space for your child to express big emotions. They teach parents to guide their children through big emotions by affirming their child’s feelings, but never teaching them that those feelings are invalid or wrong.

The problem with this teaching arises when our children’s emotions are affirmed even when their feelings don’t match the facts of the situation.



“ THE HEART IS DECEITFUL
ABOVE ALL THINGS, AND
DESPERATELY WICKED:
WHO CAN KNOW IT? ”
- JEREMIAH 17 : 9

In her blog, author and parenting coach Sarah R. Moore says “We can honor the child’s experience... we can trust that their feelings are as real to them as ours are to us.” She then gives an example of how she held a funeral for her child’s beloved insect in their garden that had died. She later reveals that as a result her child “mourned and woke up crying for two nights.” (*4 Ways to Nurture Kids’ Emotional Maturity (and Strengthen Our Own, Too.)*)^{70, 71}

In another article she advocates for parents to “embrace emotional authenticity... welcome all feelings” and “encourage self-expression.” She says we should encourage our children “to be themselves and pursue their own passions” giving an example of allowing them to express themselves in wearing outfits that might be seen as ridiculous to others. (*Conscious Parenting: 7 Important Ways to Earn & Keep Your Child's Heart.*)⁷²

She also says “I truly believe that peace on Earth begins at home” and that “if children feel loved and valued, they have the ability to love and value others.” She then states her goal plainly: “What I want is for non-believers to co-exist



peacefully... the hope that non-believers will cease believing that Christians are ‘scary’ or ‘oppressive’ or ‘crazy’ or any of the other unflattering adjectives that are bandied about in this day and age... I desire peace for everyone... May we have mutual acceptance as a starting point.” (*2 Reasons Why Some Christian Parenting Books Might Not Look Like They Used To.*)⁷³

Let's measure these ideas with Scripture.

When our child's feelings don't match the facts of the situation, should we honor their feelings? Does peace begin with emotional security in the home? Are Christians called to coexist in mutual acceptance with the world?

“REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS;
AGAIN I WILL SAY, REJOICE. LET
YOUR REASONABLENESS BE
KNOWN TO EVERYONE. THE LORD
IS AT HAND; DO NOT BE ANXIOUS
ABOUT ANYTHING, BUT IN
EVERYTHING BY PRAYER AND
SUPPLICATION WITH
THANKSGIVING LET YOUR
REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN TO
GOD. AND THE PEACE OF GOD,
WHICH SURPASSES ALL
UNDERSTANDING, WILL GUARD
YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR MINDS
IN CHRIST JESUS. FINALLY,
BROTHERS, WHATEVER IS TRUE,
WHATEVER IS HONORABLE,
WHATEVER IS JUST, WHATEVER IS
PURE, WHATEVER IS LOVELY,
WHATEVER IS COMMENDABLE, IF
THERE IS ANY EXCELLENCE, IF
THERE IS ANYTHING WORTHY OF
PRAISE, THINK ABOUT THESE
THINGS.”

- PHILIPPIANS 4 : 4 - 8

The Bible makes it clear that we should not be ruled by our emotions, but rather choose to focus on praiseworthy things and rejoice in the Lord - at all times. Often times our emotions are deceiving us. There are times that our children's emotions are completely valid, like when their first pet dies, when a valued possession breaks, when plans change and they're disappointed, or when they fall and skin their knee.

There are also times when their emotions need to be checked rather than validated, like when they don't get to push all the buttons on the credit card reader at the grocery store, when you don't make them their favorite meal for dinner, or when they don't get to ride in the car without their seatbelt.

One of the major problems we see today with young people is a disassociation from reality because of their emotions. Case in point, the LGBTQ+ agenda. Someone feels like they are a woman, but in reality they are a man. And the world is telling you to validate their emotions and affirm their distorted beliefs.

Always affirming your child's emotions does not lead to emotional maturity, it leads to dysphoria.

Always affirming your child's emotions teaches them to be ruled by their emotions instead of being the ruler of their emotions.



When one of my sons was upset by anything, small or big, his emotional reaction was always the same. Zero to a thousand in an instant with the kind of scream that would make you think he was seriously injured or in danger. He was 4-5 years old and we would be at the playground and he would suddenly scream so loudly, every parent would turn their heads trying to see which child was hurt and I would awkwardly reassure them that he was fine, that that was just his cry, that he had probably just not gotten his way with something. I became rather desensitized to his scream for a time, until I realized the potential for harm if we didn't address it. I had to reason with him about controlling the level of his emotional response. I told him a modified version of the boy who cried wolf story, where the little boy screamed when his water cup was empty, screamed when he didn't get to go first, screamed when his brother told him "no", and each time his parent came running thinking he was in serious trouble, and became frustrated that the scream was not the emergency it sounded like. So by the time he screamed because he saw a wolf, his parent had grown weary of his screams and chose to delay in their coming, and the boy was attacked by the wolf. This woke him up quickly. It clicked. I was able to reason with him that his emotional response needed to match the reality of the situation otherwise people would start to believe that nothing was an emergency since he made everything sound like an emergency. It took time, practice, and patience, but he learned how to control his emotional responses. He didn't need his emotions to be affirmed, he needed them to be checked.

Count your blessings, name them one by one...

With all of my children, we talk about how to change our attitude and choose to be joyful. When they have a sour attitude, I ask them to quickly name five things they're thankful for. After many years of doing this little practice with them, one hundred percent of the time, my children start feeling better halfway through their list, and usually their tears quickly turn to earnest giggling as they keep thinking of things they're grateful for. And by the end, their mood has shifted and they are in control of their emotions once more. Just like the Bible says, we can focus on the good things of God and He will bring us peace that surpasses understanding. He is the source of our Peace.

**What about mutual acceptance - is it a Biblical concept?
Should peaceful coexistence be a goal for the believer?**

“ YOU ADULTEROUS PEOPLE!
DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT
FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD
IS ENMITY WITH GOD?
THEREFORE WHOEVER WISHES
TO BE A FRIEND OF THE
WORLD MAKES HIMSELF AN
ENEMY OF GOD.”
- JAMES 4 : 4

“ INDEED, ALL WHO DESIRE TO
LIVE A GODLY LIFE IN CHRIST
JESUS WILL BE PERSECUTED.”
- 2 TIMOTHY 3 : 1 2

24

We are not called to be friends with the world or united with the world in peaceful coexistence. We should expect the world to not only have “unflattering adjectives” for us, but to literally hate us, because the world first hated Jesus (John 15:18). True peace and security come from one thing and one thing only: righteousness, which comes by faith in Jesus (Isaiah 32:17, 2 Corinthians 5:21). Peace is not merely the absence of conflict, it’s the calm we feel inside of us even when we are experiencing pain, suffering, and chaos.

When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, He quoted Scripture, and Jesus responded with more Scripture (Matthew 4:5-6). Satan makes himself to appear as an angel of light, using even God's Word and godliness to disarm and cajole his prey. It is through cleverly crafted half-truths that he is thus able to deceive even believers who are not firmly rooted in the full counsel of Scripture. **Do not be deceived.**

“ YOU ARE OF YOUR FATHER THE
DEVIL, AND YOUR WILL IS TO DO
YOUR FATHER'S DESIRES. HE WAS
A MURDERER FROM THE
BEGINNING, AND DOES NOT STAND
IN THE TRUTH, BECAUSE **THERE IS
NO TRUTH IN HIM.** WHEN HE LIES,
HE SPEAKS OUT OF HIS OWN
CHARACTER, FOR HE IS A LIAR
AND THE FATHER OF LIES.”

- JOHN 8 : 4 4

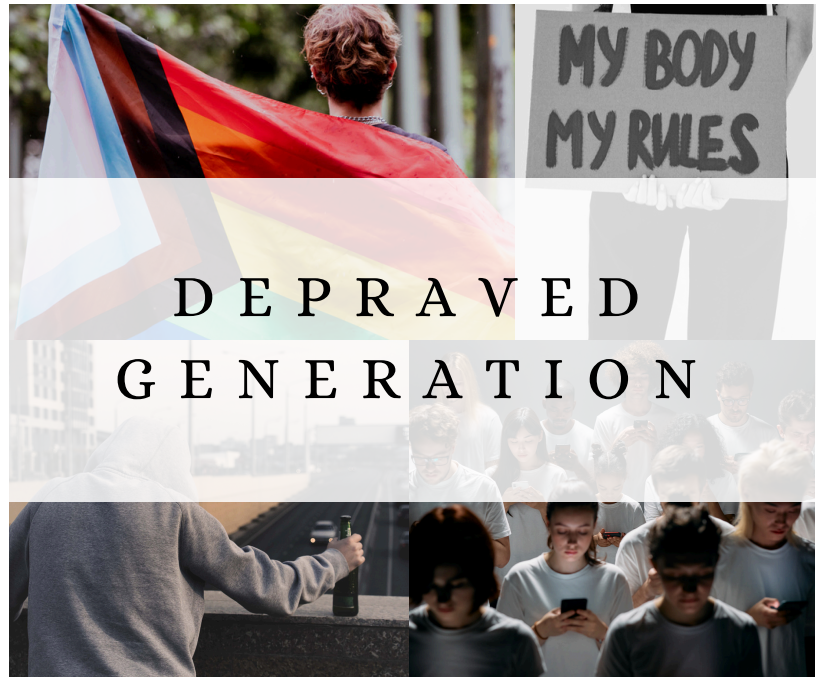
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While there may be some truth and good ideas that have come from individual Gentle Parenting influencers, the credit does not go to the influencer or to the Gentle Parenting methods, but to Lord God Almighty. **If there is anything good to be found, all the glory belongs to God alone, because He alone is able to work through us even when we are deceived. He alone is able to work all things together for the good of those who love Him, even when they are so very lost in false teachings.** I do not wish to condemn anyone who has been deceived by false teachings, but to shed light on these deceptions and to implore you to lay them down at the feet of Jesus.

In the next chapter, let's examine the origin of the teachings that are being advanced by the Gentle Parenting movement. As believers, we are called to be strangers in this world (1 Peter 2:11).

Are there any major differences between the Christian and secular versions of Gentle Parenting?

chapter 04



DEPRAVED GENERATION

“ BUT UNDERSTAND THIS, THAT
IN THE LAST DAYS THERE WILL
COME TIMES OF DIFFICULTY. FOR
PEOPLE WILL BE LOVERS OF SELF,
LOVERS OF MONEY, PROUD,
ARROGANT, ABUSIVE,
DISOBEDIENT TO THEIR PARENTS,
UNGRATEFUL, UNHOLY,
HEARTLESS, UNAPPEASABLE,
SLANDEROUS, WITHOUT SELF-
CONTROL, BRUTAL, NOT LOVING
GOOD, TREACHEROUS, RECKLESS,
SWOLLEN WITH CONCEIT, LOVERS
OF PLEASURE RATHER THAN
LOVERS OF GOD, HAVING THE
APPEARANCE OF GODLINESS, BUT
DENYING ITS POWER.
AVOID SUCH PEOPLE.”

- 2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5

Throughout history there has been a general sigh from the older generation about the folly of the younger generation.⁷⁴ But this list given to us in 2 Timothy is beyond any basic kind of folly. And while history has seen its fair share of some of the elements on this list, there is no record of the entire world seeing the fullness of this list emerging within a single generation like it is today.

Within today's generation, there are so many who tout the self-love movement,⁷⁶ the prosperity gospel,⁷⁷ pride month,⁷⁸ and self-proclaimed experts.⁷⁹ The youth is filled with bullying⁸⁰ and cyberbullying⁸¹ that lead some to suicide.⁸² Scores of children who feel entitled⁸³ and many are completely disobedient⁸⁴ to their parents. Even children being brainwashed to hate entire races of people so much they would be willing to die if it meant killing their foresworn enemy.⁸⁵ Perversions abound with the trans agenda inundating children everywhere:⁸⁶ in school, social media, TV, books, games, and movies. The majority don't know how to even have civil discourse when they are confronted with different opinions,⁸⁷ let alone be able to remain friends. They demand that the rest of the world fully embrace their perception of themselves regardless of the facts.^{88, 89} When confronted with basic facts, the reaction is to falsely accuse and name call.⁹⁰ We see people who gorge on self-indulgence⁹¹ rather than self-control, and are cruel to anyone who would attempt to help them reign themselves in. Regarding themselves⁹² as gods they have nothing but contempt for what the Almighty God has called good.^{93, 94} Pursuing a godly appearance through psychology, science, and spiritualism, they reject the existence of sin and scoff at the Savior they so desperately need.⁹⁵

A generation fraught with utter depravity.

How did we get here?

There are a number of influential forces that the enemy has used over roughly the last 150 years to push us in this direction. Many will want to blame the leftists in America, but remember this is an earth-wide generation we are talking about, and the western modern society simply possesses these traits in different ways than other parts of the world. To look at how we got here, let's look at where the Bible says we will be going:

A one-world government with one religion (Revelation 13:1-15). A government where one ruler known as Antichrist will rise up and require everyone, both small and great, to worship his image and to receive a mark in their hand or in their forehead in order to buy or sell (Revelation 13:16-18). The spirit of Antichrist is at work already with all power and signs and lying wonders of Satan (2 Thessalonians 2:7-10). And one of the many ways he is preparing for the time that the Lord will allow him to briefly prevail is by attacking the very first institution the Lord created: the family. As Satan's influence grows in children's lives, he shapes a generation that may receive him.



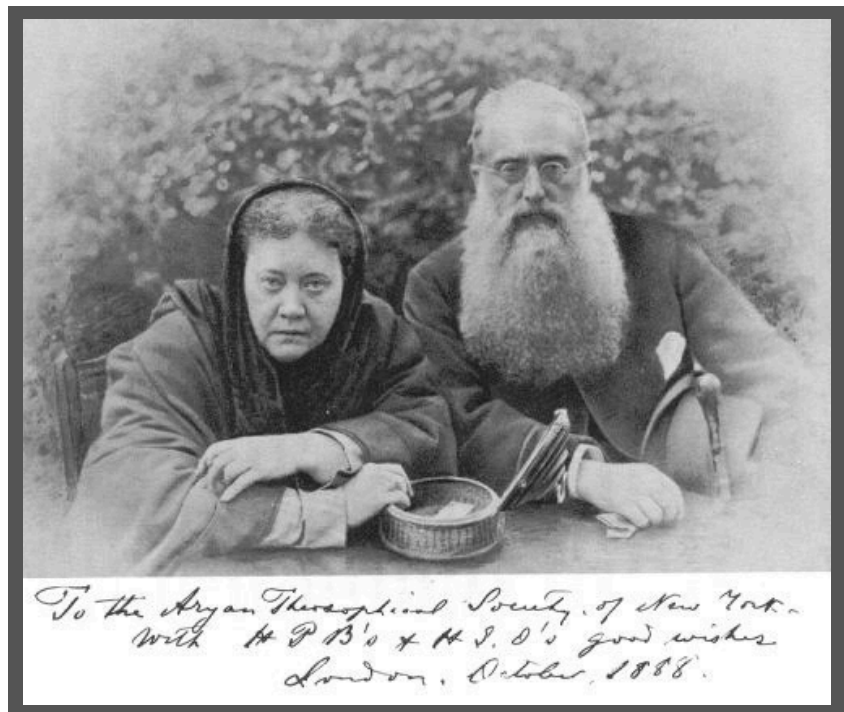
“ B E S O B E R - M I N D E D ; B E
W A T C H F U L . Y O U R A D V E R S A R Y
T H E D E V I L P R O W L S A R O U N D
L I K E A R O A R I N G L I O N , S E E K I N G
S O M E O N E T O D E V O U R . ”
- 1 P E T E R 5 : 8

Lions stalk⁹⁶ their prey before attacking. Their attack causes the animals to disperse and panic so the lion can isolate and kill a weaker prey. Children are the most impressionable of all. It began in the garden when he deceived Eve into doubting and questioning the Word of God. His methods have not changed, and we ought not to be ignorant of the Devil's schemes (2 Cor. 2:11).

Satan is after children.

The next several pages will expose the origins of evil teachings that are directly affecting nearly all children today. It is not my desire to bring life to the evil deeds of darkness. Instead I wish to expose them as for what they truly are: demonic teachings that have already infiltrated governments, schools, churches, and homes, deceiving millions. Because they are so commonly spoken of and embraced by many Christians today, this next section serves to shed light on this evil (as Ephesians 5:11-14 instructs) in an effort to help people come out of deception. It is my hope that by understanding where these teachings originated, people will resist them and become firmly rooted in the sound doctrine of Scripture alone.

In 1875, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (left) co-founded the **Theosophical Society** with Henry Steel Olcott (right).⁹⁷ This organization was founded on the esoteric teachings that Blavatsky claimed she received from a group of spiritual masters, also referred to as The “Spiritual Hierarchy.”⁹⁸



Blavatsky and Olcott in 1888. Theosophical Society.³

These masters were not living people. These were spiritual beings that she believed were guiding the evolution of humanity to enlightenment. In her book *The Secret Doctrine* she wrote that “Satan and his rebellious host will thus prove... to have become the direct Saviours and Creators of ‘divine man.’... It is Satan who is the God of our planet and the only God.” She claimed that Satan (or Lucifer) represents the “ever-living symbol of self-sacrifice for the intellectual independence of humanity.” (*The Secret Doctrine*, Volume II, page 234-235.)⁹⁹



Helena Blavatsky ⁴

Blavatsky wrote that when Jesus said He saw the devil fall like lightning, He was referring to Lucifer the light bringer as the “divine Wisdom falling like lightning on, and quickening the intellects of those who fight the devils of ignorance and superstition.” She referred to Lucifer as “Wisdom” that came “in the shape of the incarnating Spirits... the Angels fallen into generation” and are “metaphorically [the] Serpents and Dragons of Wisdom.” (*The Secret Doctrine, Volume II, page 230.*)

She said “it is but natural... to view Satan, the Serpent of Genesis, as the real creator and benefactor, the Father of Spiritual mankind. For it is he who was the ‘Harbinger of Light,’ bright radiant Lucifer, who opened the eyes of the automaton created by Jehovah, as alleged; and he who was the first to whisper: ‘in the day ye eat thereof ye shall be as Elohim, knowing good and evil’” and that therefore Satan “can only be regarded in the light of a Saviour... the ever-loving ‘Messenger’ (the angel), the Seraphim and Cherubim who both knew well, and loved still more, and who conferred on us spiritual, instead of physical immortality...” (*The Secret Doctrine, Volume II, page 243.*)⁹⁹

As you read this next section, remember that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). God is the source of godliness, and godliness apart from God is *NOT* good (2 Timothy 3:1-5 and 1 Timothy 6:3-5).



Alice Bailey⁵

Alice Bailey was a new age **theosophist** in the 1920's to 1940's and arguably the most significant voice of spiritual influence in the workings of the United Nations.¹⁰⁰ She was a disciple of Helena Blavatsky and was wholeheartedly committed to preparing humanity to receive a coming world teacher she referred to as "The Christ". This world teacher is not to be confused with Jesus Christ, but is rather someone she believed would be ushered in by humanity when the world was coexisting in peaceful collaboration and goodwill towards one another.

"The major required preparation [for the coming of the 'Christ'] is a world at peace; however, that peace must be based on an educated goodwill, which will lead inevitably to **right human relations, and therefore to the establishment of lines of light between nations and nation, religion and religion, group and group and man and man."**

(Alice Bailey, *The Externalisation of the Hierarchy*, p. 611.)¹⁰¹

Bailey made contact with a spiritual being she refers to as "The Tibetan" or "Master Djwal Khul."¹⁰² She claimed that this spiritual being was a member of Blavatsky's "Spiritual Hierarchy" which she said was "a group of wise and enlightened beings working behind the scenes to guide our planet" and includes "great teachers such as Socrates, Shri Krishna, Mohammed, the Buddha and 'The Christ.'"¹⁰³ According to Lucis Trust, this spiritual entity, "Master Djwal Khul," used Alice Bailey to write 19 books and then Bailey wrote an additional 5 books herself.¹⁰⁴ They were first published under Bailey's company entitled Lucifer Publishing Co., but later they changed the name to Lucis Publishing Co.¹⁰⁵

Alice and her husband Foster Bailey established four non-governmental organizations (NGO's): Lucis Trust in 1922, The Arcane School in 1923, World Goodwill in 1932, and Triangles in 1937.^{106, 107, 108, 109} The purpose of Bailey's NGO's is to work in partnership with the United Nations to spread the teachings of "Master Djwal Khul" and the Spiritual Hierarchy so that "the way will then be cleared for these great teachers to return to outer physical plane activity... In the coming decades members of the Hierarchy will begin the process of externalisation, moving outward onto the physical plane. They will again walk among humanity¹¹⁵ to help usher in the new age and prepare human consciousness for the reappearance of the World Teacher."

One of the ways the Spiritual Hierarchy tries to usher in the world teacher is through a prayer of meditation called "The Great Invocation." The last line of the second stanza reads "May 'Christ'* return to Earth."¹¹⁶



The explanation is given that "many religions believe in a World Teacher, a 'Coming One', knowing him under such names as the Lord Maitreya, the Imam Mahdi, the Kalki Avatar and the Bodhisattva. These terms are sometimes used in versions of the Great Invocation for people of specific faiths." "Triangles" works to connect people around the world in groups of three to say the Great Invocation prayer together daily, forming a "triangle" of meditation.

"The purpose of the Great Invocation is to invoke the appearance of a 'divine Intermediary,' a sacred Messenger to guide humanity... A prerequisite for the appearance of a 'divine Intermediary' is the achievement of **right human relations**."¹¹⁷

The Spiritual Hierarchy tries to produce **right human relations** through the esoteric teachings on “the seven rays.” **Theosophist** Sarah McKenchie refers to these rays as different types of energies in every individual. “The ray types give the new psychological approach to man through an understanding of the energies which animate him and make him what he is... It will awaken psychologists to a true understanding of man.”¹¹⁸

Bailey wrote that “...we shall have a practical method of analysis whereby we can arrive at a right understanding of ourselves as ensouling entities, and at a wiser comprehension of our fellowmen. We can then deal more intelligently with ourselves, with our children and with our friends and associates. We shall find ourselves able to cooperate more wisely with the Plan as it is seeking expression at any particular time.” (*The Seven Rays of Light*, Page 7.)¹¹⁹

According to Lucis Trust, The Tibetan stated that “The teaching on the Seven Rays” should be taught by “emphasizing the psychological angle, because the new psychology is in the making. **If esoteric teaching is eventually to be public in its presentation, it will be given out along the lines of psychology** because esotericism concerns the consciousness aspect of man and God.”¹²⁰

In her book *Problems Of Humanity*, Bailey wrote that “education in the hands of any church would spell disaster” (page 34). She singled out fundamental Christianity and Orthodox Judaism in particular as separatist in nature, stating that they “have failed to present Christ as he essentially is.” (Page 34.)¹²¹

Bailey discussed the need for children to be raised in a “new atmosphere” (page 47) in order to prepare a generation of children to not only reject such separatist religions, but also embody the necessary qualities that lead to the “**right human relations**” and “goodwill” (page 43) that she believed was the required preparation for the world to receive “The Christ.”¹⁰¹



Theosophical Society Seal⁶



Bailey wrote¹²¹ “Let us try to formulate a long range plan which will meet with no hindrance from the methods immediately employed” and stated that **“two major ideas should immediately be taught to the children of every country. They are: the value of the individual and the fact of the one humanity.”** She also suggested “that the textbooks be rewritten in terms of **right human relations** and not from the present nationalistic and separative angles. We have also pointed out certain basic ideas which should be immediately inculcated: the unique value of the individual, the beauty of humanity, the relation of the individual to the

whole and his responsibility to fit into the general picture in a constructive manner and voluntarily” (page 35). She claimed that “the child, as an individual” would need to “be developed and equipped, trained and motivated and then taught his responsibilities to the whole and the value of the contribution which he can and must make to the group” (pages 57-58).

Bailey believed “World Unity will be a fact when the children of the world are taught... that the religious differences [of the world] are largely the result of man-made quarrels over human interpretations of truth. Thus gradually, our quarrels and differences will be offset and the idea of the One Humanity will take their place” (page 61). She wrote that **these new teachings would be potent if “the child is taken young enough and if he is shielded from all contrary teaching for a long enough time”** (page 51).

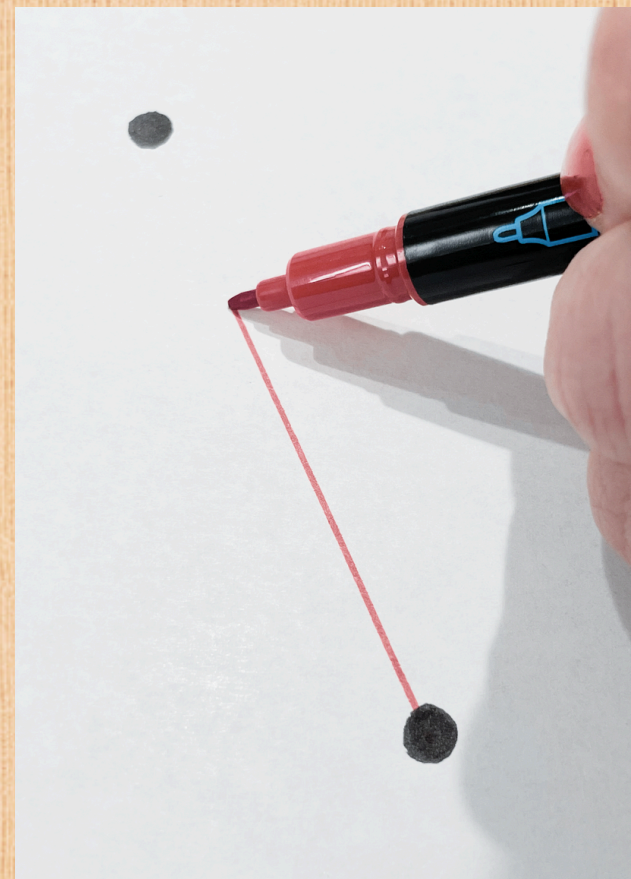
The goal being to form a generation that pursues godliness apart from God.

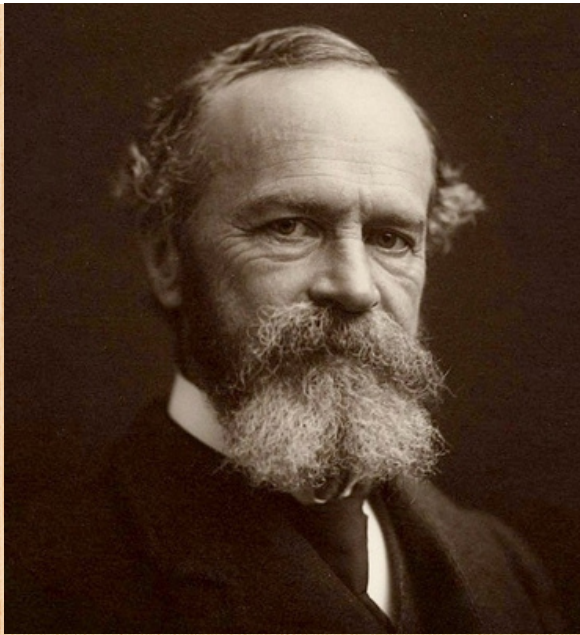
Bailey wrote there were three major changes that needed to be made with regards to the atmosphere in which children were to be raised and educated:¹²¹

“1. An atmosphere of **love wherein fear is cast out... wherein he will receive courteous treatment and will be expected to be equally courteous to others... [an] atmosphere of love... based upon a realization of the potentialities of the child as an individual**, upon freedom from prejudice and racial antagonisms and upon a true compassionate tenderness... founded upon the recognition of the difficulty of daily living, upon **sensitivity to a child's normally affectionate response**, and upon the conviction that love always draws forth what is best in anyone” (page 47).

“2. An atmosphere of patience... [where] the child can learn the first rudiments of responsibility... [this] will call for much **patience on the part of the teacher** but it is fundamental **in determining a child's character for good** and his future usefulness in the world” (page 47-48).

“3. An atmosphere of understanding... [where] teachers or **parents explain to a child the reasons** for the activities and the demands that are made upon him... [to] **inculcate in him a consideration of motives**. Many of the things which an average child does are not wrong in themselves; they are prompted by a thwarted, inquiring spirit, by the impulse to retaliate for some injustice (based on the adult's lack of understanding his motivation), by an inability to employ time correctly and usefully and by an urge to attract attention. These are simply the **initial gestures of the emerging individual**. Older people are apt to foster in a child an early and unnecessary sense of wrong-doing; they lay emphasis upon petty little things which should be ignored but which are annoying” (page 48).





William James⁷



Carl Jung⁸

Two prominent members of **Blavatsky's Theosophical Society** were psychologists William James (left)¹²² and Carl Jung (right).¹²³ James was the first US educator to offer a course in psychology at Harvard University. He was one of the most influential philosophers of the 19th century, considered "The Father of American Psychology."¹²⁴ He was also a student of Blavatsky's work and repeatedly quoted her book *The Voice of the Silence* in his Gifford Lectures. In his book *Varieties of Religious Experience*, he wrote "**Why does man go out to look for a God?... It is your own heart beating**, and you did not know, you were mistaking it for something external. He, nearest of the near, my own self, the reality of my own life, my body and my soul. — I am Thee and Thou are Me. That is your own nature. Assert it, manifest it. Not to become pure, you are pure already. You are not to be perfect, you are that already. Every good thought which you think or act upon is simply tearing the veil, as it were, and the purity, the infinity, the God behind, manifests itself — the eternal Subject of everything, the eternal Witness in this universe, **your own Self**" (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, page 355).¹²⁵

Jung was a Swiss psychologist who founded analytical psychology.¹²⁶ Although his philosophies diverged towards the end of his career, he spent many years in close friendship with Sigmund Freud, and the two greatly influenced one another's works. Jung believed that "**a new God had been born in his soul**, the God who is the son of the frogs, Abraxas. Jung understood this symbolically. He saw this figure as representing the **uniting of the Christian God with Satan...**"¹²⁷ (*Liber Novus, The Red Book*, 205-206). Beacon Magazine claimed that Jung "was consciously able to leave the energy he embodied — the energy he recognized as the cosmic 'Christ' in him — alone, allowing 'Christ' to do his work in the world through him" (*The Beacon Magazine*).¹²³

“ N O W T H E S P I R I T E X P R E S S L Y S A Y S
T H A T I N L A T E R T I M E S S O M E W I L L
D E P A R T F R O M T H E F A I T H B Y
D E V O T I N G T H E M S E L V E S T O
D E C E I T F U L S P I R I T S A N D
T E A C H I N G S O F D E M O N S . ”

- 1 T I M O T H Y 4 : 1

A spiritual entity influenced Helena Blavatsky, Alice Bailey, William James, and Carl Jung, to shape a new generation, showing them how to transform the atmosphere that children worldwide would be raised in to be one without fear, where they would be treated courteously, where their actions would not be framed as “wrong-doing,” where **theosophy**, the philosophy that God is found within, would be taught under the guise of psychology, and where children would embrace their responsibility to the greater good as citizens of one humanity. A new generation that would seek after man-made **peace and security** apart from God and receive the “world teacher,” the one they call “The Christ.” The same person the Bible refers to as “Antichrist” - the “lawless one” who will stand in the temple of God and proclaim himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:2-12). The one who will rise up during the worst time the world will ever see (Daniel 7, 9:27, Matthew 24:15-27, Revelation 13).

The basic methods found in Gentle Parenting today originated from a literal doctrine of demons designed to usher in the Antichrist.

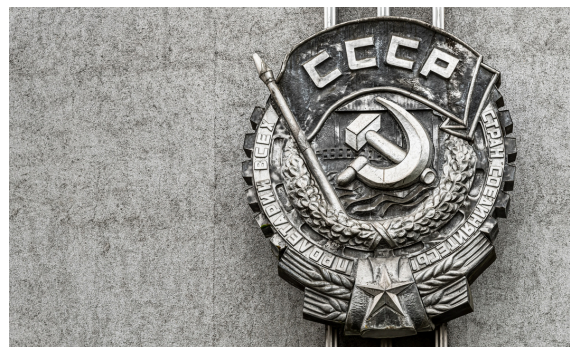
Now that we see where this generational change originated, let’s take a look at how the enemy has been using and dividing the church regarding Biblical discipline. Both the pro and anti spanking movements are really just two sides of the same coin.

“NOW CONCERNING THE TIMES AND THE SEASONS, BROTHERS, YOU HAVE NO NEED TO HAVE ANYTHING WRITTEN TO YOU. FOR YOU YOURSELVES ARE FULLY AWARE THAT THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL COME LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT. WHILE PEOPLE ARE SAYING, “**THERE IS PEACE AND SECURITY,**” THEN SUDDEN DESTRUCTION WILL COME UPON THEM AS LABOR PAINS COME UPON A PREGNANT WOMAN, AND THEY WILL NOT ESCAPE.”

- 1 THESSALONIANS 5 : 1 - 3

Leading up the early 1900's, churches were the primary foundation for children's education throughout the world, and physical punishment in the home was common. As the popularity of schools increased, most countries granted teachers the same right as parents with regards to corporal punishment in school, as they were legally considered a comparable stand-in authority figure. In other words, **parents handed over their God-given *shebet* to the schools by way of the church.**

In 1917, corporal punishment was outlawed in the Soviet Union because it went against communist values. “The policy of the Communist Party and of the Government was directed against parental authority” (*Parental Authority in the Soviet Union, Teitelbaum, Salomon M. Page 57*). Communists in other countries such as Britain also campaigned against corporal punishment in schools. This began a new trend that would eventually spill over into nearly every nation over the next 50 years. Today, 90% of the worldwide child population is under some form of corporal punishment prohibition.



Emblem of the Soviet Union⁹

In 1924, the League of Nations adopted the Geneva Declaration¹³⁸ that recognized **for the first time the existence of children's rights** and the responsibility of all adults towards children. Specifically the **right to development, assistance, relief and protection**. This introduced the concept that children don't merely belong to their parents, they belong to the **one humanity**.



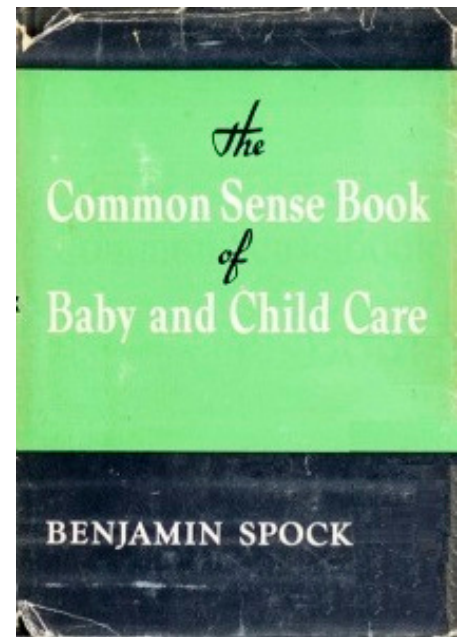
Official Opening of the League of Nations¹⁰

By 1929, **compulsory education laws** had passed in 124 countries, territories, and states, including all 50 of the United States.¹³⁹⁻¹⁶⁸ In 1948, the United Nations signed The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in 1966 they signed the International Covenant on



Civil and Political Rights. Both of these treaties resulted in the nations of the world removing church from schools in order to provide **“the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion”** in school (*UDHR, article 18*).^{169, 170} In so doing, **schools began to pass the shebet from the church to the government**.

In 1946, Dr. Benjamin Spock introduced a revolutionary parenting method in his book *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* which has been translated in 39 languages and sold over 50 million copies worldwide. The first line of the book reads: **“Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do.”**¹⁷¹ He specifically targeted moms, encouraging loving affection and advocating against any form of physical punishment.¹⁷² He used easy-to-understand language to impart Freudian philosophy¹⁷³ which sexualized children, particularly by normalizing the concept that children three to six years of age



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“love intensely and romantically those who are close to them, especially their parents” and that they develop **“a childish kind of sexual feeling”** for them (page 368). He also **encouraged parents not to be so strict with regards to their children masturbating**, stating that **“between the ages of six and puberty, it seems as if the child, by his own nature, makes an effort to suppress the impulse to masturbate or to become involved in sex play with others”**, that children only masturbate **“because they are nervous”** so you should **“find out what's causing the tenseness, instead of attacking the masturbation directly”** and that the only reason to dissuade children from masturbating at all is because **“children must adapt to a society that disapproves,”** not because it is sinful or because it could seriously harm them (pages 370-371).²⁵⁵

By the mid-sixties, left-leaning Spock was often criticized by the conservative right, and many blamed his book for the entire counter-cultural revolution of the 1960's.¹⁷⁴ Particularly in the conservative Christian circles, an extreme emphasis began to be placed on punitive discipline in the home, stricter rules at church and school, and a sternness in the authority of adults overseeing children. In the post-war world, society's focus was narrowing in on child-rearing to change the world, to usher in **peace and security**, and society was experiencing a great divide on how to achieve that goal.¹³²

In 1966, Dr. Diana Baumrind introduced the three Parenting Styles: Authoritarian, Authoritative, and Permissive.²⁵

The spanking debate grew more intense and as the world saw the steady removal of corporal punishment from schools, the question of whether or not parents should have the right to autonomy with regards to spanking in the home was raised. Conservative Christians began to speak up. In 1970, Dr. James Dobson's book *Dare to Discipline* was released, followed by several Christian pro-spanking books over the following 30 years. These works included Ronald E Williams, *The Correction and Salvation of Children* in 1980, Michael Pearl's *To Train Up a Child* in 1994, Tedd Tripp's *Shepherding a Child's Heart* in 1995, and Gary Ezzo's *Growing Kids God's Way: Reaching the Heart of Your Child with a God-Centered Purpose* in 1997.

While many of the ideas in these books are solidly rooted in Scripture, some of the ideas that were formed as a response to the cultural shifts of their time are arguably unbiblical and perceived by many as extreme, such as Pearl's methods of spanking¹⁷⁶ and his belief that your child could be sanctified apart from salvation,¹⁷⁷ or Ezzo's belief that breastfeeding an infant on-demand was a form of idolatry.¹⁷⁸



This only furthered the divide. **People began to associate all pro-spanking and punitive parenting methods with Dr. Baumrind's Authoritarian style of parenting rather than the Authoritative style she had placed it in.**^{3, 4, 5}

In 1979, Sweden became the first country to outlaw spanking in the home. This began a new trend that is currently spilling over into other nations, with 14% of the worldwide child population today living in nations or states that outlaw spanking in the home.¹³⁷ **Governments have begun to declare that parents do not hold the God-given *shebet* over their family.**

In 1989, the United Nations held the Convention on the Rights of the Child¹⁷⁹ which was the foundation for the 2006 United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child¹⁸⁰ where they commented negatively on physical punishment. Robert Muller¹⁸¹ created the "World Core Curriculum" which earned him the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education in 1989.¹⁸² The first goal



of Muller's World Core Curriculum is "Assisting the child in becoming an integrated individual who can deal with personal experience while seeing himself as a part of 'the greater whole.' In other words, **promote growth of the group idea, so that group good, group understanding, group interrelations and group goodwill replace all limited, self-centered objectives, leading to group consciousness**" (World Core Curriculum Manual, page 2). In the preface of the World Core Curriculum Manual it says that "**the underlying philosophy upon which the Robert Muller School is based will be found in the teachings set forth in the books of Alice A. Bailey, by the Tibetan teacher, Djwal Khul.**"¹⁸³

While it appears good to recognize the rights of children, the reality is these "rights" are being used to reduce parental authority and Biblical teaching through laws that restrict parents with regards to their children's education, that set an age for children's right to privacy from their own parents, that lower the age of consent for sexual activity, and that allow children to make irreversible medical decisions such as vaccination, abortion, puberty blockers, and transgender surgery without parents' knowledge or consent.

In 1994, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) was formally introduced.¹⁸⁴ This method of developing "emotional maturity and empathy" beginning in pre-K is the means by which schools have been indoctrinating children with the trans agenda and critical race theory.¹⁸⁵ The framework for SEL is nearly identical to that of Gentle Parenting, with the goal to develop social awareness and empathy for others through self-awareness and self-management.¹⁸⁶

In 2006, Samuel Martin released his revolutionary Christian anti-spanking book: *Thy Rod and Thy Staff They Comfort Me: Christians and the Spanking Controversy*. This book provides much of the theological foundation and modern understanding of the Hebrew words for rod and child that Christian Gentle Parents use today.¹⁸⁷ Although Martin presented his anti-spanking views from a Christian perspective, he admittedly adopted his views first from secular psychologist Dr. Philip Greven. Before Martin read Greven's book *Spare the Child: The Religious Roots of Punishment and the Psychological Impact of Physical Abuse*, his view of spanking was positive. But he said "that all changed when I read" Greven's book. He stated that Greven's book "opened up the whole issue of smacking...in a different way that I had ever looked at it before" (*Thy Rod and Thy Staff They Comfort Me*, page 10).¹⁸⁸

Greven's view of God in the Old Testament was that He "constantly sought to demonstrate His power and authority, often through acts of violence, vengeance and murder" (*Spare The Child*, page 46) and that there was a "radical change in the nature of God" (page 49-50). Greven also introduced the idea that the rod was a judicial instrument rather than one for familial discipline, stating that "chastisements, in the form of physical punishments with the rod, were often only the first stage in the progression of discipline from pain to death" (page 49) and claimed that the Lord testing Abraham with his son Isaac was "one of the most profoundly disturbing examples of Jehova's willingness to destroy human life in order to assure himself of the unquestioning and absolute obedience of his subjects" (page 46). These were just some of the concepts in Greven's book that ultimately shaped Martin's view of God and discipline that have now trickled into Gentle Parenting.¹⁸⁹

Samuel Martin was actually influenced by several extra-biblical sources who held what he considered the "authorized authority" to interpret the Scriptures (*They Rod and Thy Staff They Comfort Me*, page 117). In fact, he claimed it was absolutely vital to understand that "Biblical interpretation should be left into the hands of those who are trained to do so" (page 14).¹⁸⁸

In 2010, Dr. Baumrind published her article speaking against spanking bans from a purely scientific perspective.²⁶ People began to cancel her as a voice of authority and expertise in the realm of parenting.¹⁹⁰ Perhaps this is the reason why Psychology websites and Gentle Parenting influencers don't use many of her quotes and definitions regarding the three parenting styles that she introduced and defined. It should also be noted that Dr. Baumrind was an anti-zionist, a member of the Communist party, and her views on the ideal way to raise children who would take their place in society was shaped and influenced by the Marxist philosophies of her professors at Hunter College.¹⁹¹

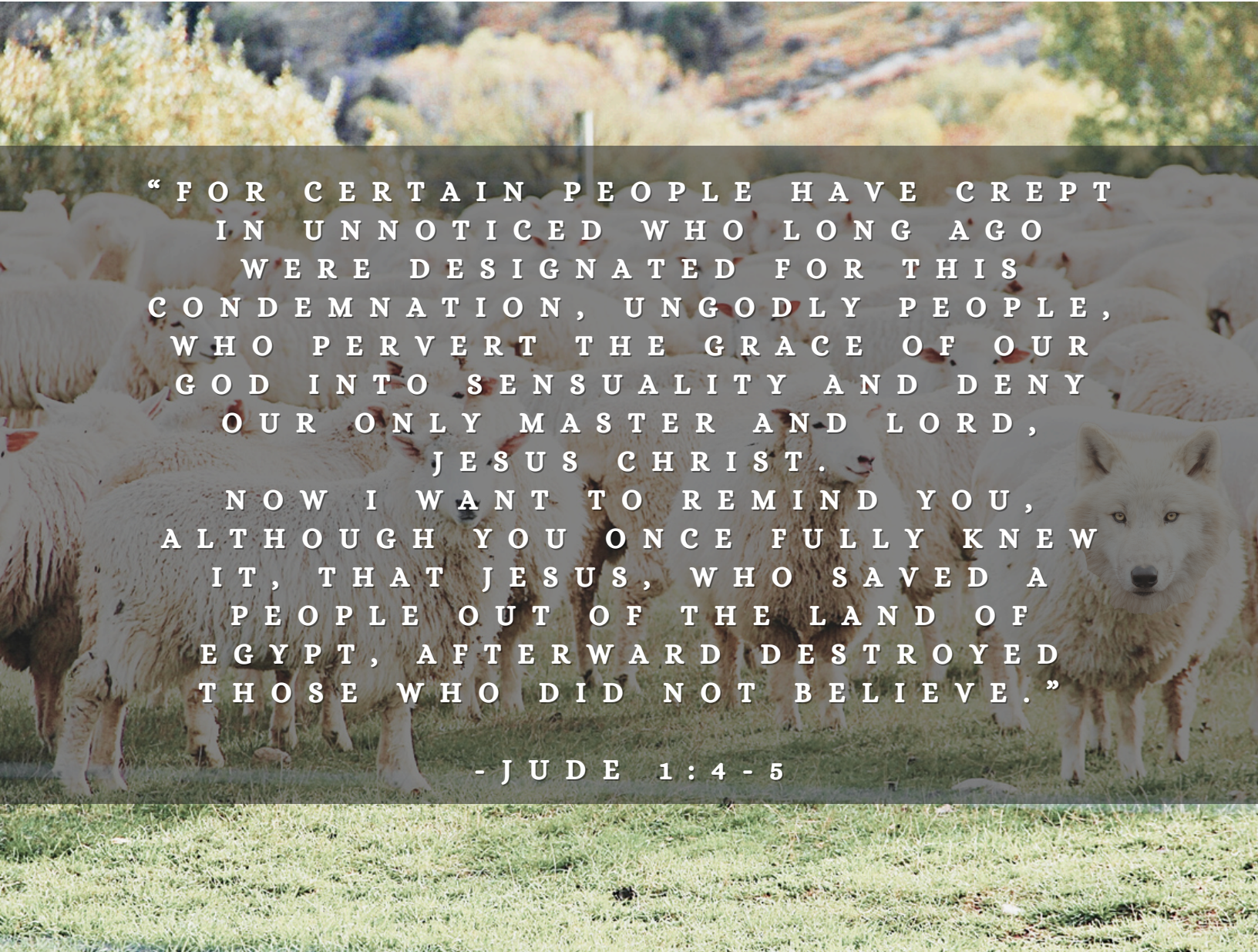
In 2012, Sarah Ockwell-Smith published her first secular Gentle Parenting book *BabyCalm* followed by over a dozen more Gentle Parenting books released to date. While her parenting methods are largely the same as those in Christian Gentle Parenting, she exclusively relies on science, psychology, and anecdotal experience to support her views.⁶

In 2014, Christian culture began to adopt and rebrand the secular Gentle Parenting movement with L.R. Knost's book *Jesus, the Gentle Parent*.

In 2024, #gentleparenting has over 5 billion TikTok views, over 900k instagram posts, and thousands of Facebook groups across the world with hundreds of thousands of active members and counting. It has become one of the fastest growing movements accepted by both the church and the secular world as the ideal style of parenting.^{192, 193, 194}

Just like the Christian version of Gentle Parenting presented in the previous chapter, the secular version claims that all unwanted behavior stems from either an unmet need or a parent's unreasonable expectation for the child at their stage in brain development, it does not use rewards and punishments but instead uses reasoning and natural consequences to inculcate empathy and what it claims to be intrinsic motivation, and it always validates and affirms children's emotions.⁷⁻²³

The methods, science, and reasoning are identical in both the secular and the Christian Gentle Parenting. The only difference is that many Christian influencers pluck verses out of context and twist their meaning to justify raising their children the exact same way the godless world is raising theirs.



“FOR CERTAIN PEOPLE HAVE CREPT
IN UNNOTICED WHO LONG AGO
WERE DESIGNATED FOR THIS
CONDEMNATION, UNGODLY PEOPLE,
WHO PERVERT THE GRACE OF OUR
GOD INTO SENSUALITY AND DENY
OUR ONLY MASTER AND LORD,
JESUS CHRIST.

NOW I WANT TO REMIND YOU,
ALTHOUGH YOU ONCE FULLY KNEW
IT, THAT JESUS, WHO SAVED A
PEOPLE OUT OF THE LAND OF
EGYPT, AFTERWARD DESTROYED
THOSE WHO DID NOT BELIEVE.”

- JUDE 1:4 - 5

The Bible warned us that in the last days, people would accumulate for themselves teachings that tickle their ears and would turn away from sound doctrine.

If we are wise enough to see the ways deceptive teachings have entered our books, movies, music, games, classrooms, hospitals, churches, governments... do we not have eyes to see how deceptive teachings are also wiggling their way into our homes?



People went from hating only physical punishments to now hating anything that even resembles punishment, and so many of our Christian brothers and sisters are falling for this deception. We see a parallel of today's generation in yet another verse about the Lord's *shebet*:

“You have despised the rod and all discipline.” -Ezekiel 21:10 (NRS).

The *shebet* is about your God-given authority over your family. One of Satan's schemes is to destroy the family by reducing or if possible, removing your authority over your children. He wants to be the greatest influence in your children's lives as he prepares for his seven year kingdom. **Satan has worked through both the pro-spanking and anti-spanking movements to create confusion, division, and chaos in order to reduce your parental authority. These movements are just two wings of the same bird. Remain rooted in Scripture ALONE.**

The Times & Seasons...

The depraved generation is not the only sign that we are to watch for (Matthew 25:13). The Bible foretold of many things that would be a sign to us. There would be **famines, wars, pestilences, and earthquakes** happening **simultaneously** across the earth (*Matt. 24:4-8, Mark 13:5-8, Luke 21:8-11*), there would be **apostasy** (falling away) within the church with many **false teachings** (*2 Thess. 2:3, 1 Tim. 4:1*), there would be **restrictions on marriage and meat consumption** (*1 Tim. 4:2-3*), people would **scoff at the return of Jesus** (*2 Pet. 3:3-4*), people would **deliberately overlook the fact that the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God** (*2 Pet. 3:5*), there would be a **godless and depraved generation** (*2 Tim. 3:1-8*), people would be **traveling all over the earth and knowledge would rapidly and exponentially increase** (*Daniel 12:4*), there would be a **worldwide divided kingdom** that is partly strong and partly brittle (*Daniel 2:42*), and most importantly of all, **Israel would suddenly become a prosperous nation** once more, with a **rapidly growing population, thriving agriculture, riches, and even reviving the dead language of Hebrew** (*Ezekiel 36, Isaiah 66:8, Jeremiah 33, Zephaniah 3:9*), yet **the nations of the world would one by one all turn against Israel** (*Zechariah 12:1-3, Revelation 12:13-17, Romans 11*).

Below is a list of many key events that have taken place over roughly the last 100 years that reveal to us the “times and the seasons” we are in (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11).

1910 • Social Gospel Movement¹⁹⁵

1914 • World War I and Pentacostalism^{196, 197, 198}

1917 • The land of Israel was liberated from the Ottoman Turks, and there were famines occurring simultaneously in Lebanon, Germany, East Africa, and Iran.^{199, 200-203}

1918 • Spanish flu, Feminist push for Birth Control to be available worldwide, and Jewish population in Israel 60,000.^{204, 205, 206}

1919 • First regular international passenger air service²⁰⁷

1920 • League of Nations²⁰⁸

1921 • Hebrew language revived²⁰⁹

1922 • Russian Civil War²¹⁰

1926 • Global Cooling theory²¹¹

1927 • Chinese Civil War, and TV invented^{212, 213}

1931 • First man to reach the stratosphere²¹⁴

- 1939** • World War II ²¹⁵
- 1941** • Holocaust ²¹⁶
- 1944** • Famines in Rwanda, Yemen, Indonesia, and the Netherlands, and birth of the Veganism movement ^{217-219, 220,}
- 1945** • Cold War, United Nations and Operation Paperclip ^{221, 222, 223}
- MAY 14 1948** • Israel became a nation, 3 major earthquakes took place within a few hours of one another in Japan, Russia, and Alaska, Jewish population in Israel 716,700, and famines took place in Cape Verde and the Soviet Union. ^{224, 225, 206, 217, 226}
- 1949** • Big Bang Theory ²²⁷
- 1950** • First universal credit card and first robots ^{228, 229}
- 1954** • Vietnam War ²³⁰
- 1958** • First microchip ²³¹
- 1960** • Women’s Liberation Movement and the Sexual Revolution ^{232, 233}
- 1967** • 6 Day War where Israel reclaimed major territories including Jerusalem ²³⁴
- 1969** • Pride Month ²³⁵
- 1970** • Anti-marriage movement and Jewish population in Israel 2,582,000 ^{236-237, 206}
- 1973** • Yom Kippur War and Experimenting on live, late-term aborted babies in Sweden, Finland, Australia, New York, and Connecticut. ^{238, 239}
- 1976** • Global Warming theory ²⁴⁰
- 1981** • AIDS ²⁴¹
- 1983** • Internet introduced ²⁴²
- 1990** • Persian Gulf War ²⁴³
- 1998** • Google introduced ²⁴⁴
- 2001** • 9/11 War on Terror ²⁴⁵
- 2020** • Covid ²⁴⁶
- 2023** • Hamas attacks Israel 10/7 and rise in anti-semitism worldwide ^{247, 248}
- 2024** • Jewish population in Israel 7,208,000 ²⁰⁶

The Bible warned that deceptive teachings would creep into the church (1 Timothy 4:1-2). It began even while the apostles were writing their letters to the churches (2 Peter 2:1-3), and it would increase in frequency and intensity like birth pains (1 Thessalonians 5:3, Revelation 1:1-3, and Matthew 24:8). We can certainly see that increase in the last 150 years. We don’t know how long this will last, as it began with the early church. But let us not grow weary, or become complacent and desensitized to these signs, lest we join the scoffers who say “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation” (2 Peter 3:4). ²⁵⁴

How are we to live in light of all this?

chapter 05

E X P O S I N G D A R K N E S S



The most common question I receive from people about Gentle Parenting is *“Is there anything good we can glean from it?”*

Some may say *“we can take it in, chew it up, spit out the bad and only swallow the good.”* But I stand firm that we ought to take no part in it.



“But they tell the truth about some things!”

So did the snake in the garden.

Don't walk, run away from this movement.

Removing the plank...

A few years after becoming a believer in my early twenties, I was introduced to a psychology tool through my church. Many of our church leaders were using it and endorsed it. I assumed its origin was within the church, so I never once questioned whether or not it was Biblical. I immediately found it helpful in my own life, and stuck with it. I became increasingly impressed with its helpfulness and interested in understanding it more. I read books, listened to podcasts, and brought it up in conversation everywhere I went. I shared it with my husband and we found ourselves talking about it every day. It became the main tool we used for navigating our relationship with one another and with others. It even came with its own language. We parented our children with it in mind. Our pastor spoke of it from the stage every week while talking about the Scripture. We used it to develop our character, trying to make ourselves the best version we could while having compassion on others who had not yet developed the skills we had. It became the lens through which we viewed everyone and everything, including the Bible. It grew in popularity and I saw more and more people interested in learning about it outside of my church. I was hosting workshops and giving one-on-one sessions with them. I was writing a book about how it tied into the fruits of the Spirit and was working on starting a podcast for the Christian perspective on it. I had been saturated in it for over a decade and had made a lot of headway into marketing and advertising about it.

Then one day some dear friends showed me that it was a doctrine of demons.

My initial reaction was to scoff. But my friends encouraged me to look into its true origins and measure it to Scripture, so I decided to put it to the test. My husband and I committed to taking a month away from it. We agreed not to talk about it with one another and not to use its language anymore. Every day hundreds of thoughts came to mind about it, but we brought each one before the Lord and asked Him to reveal the truth to us as we opened up His Word

Less than a week into our test, we both felt convicted that this was in fact a doctrine of demons.



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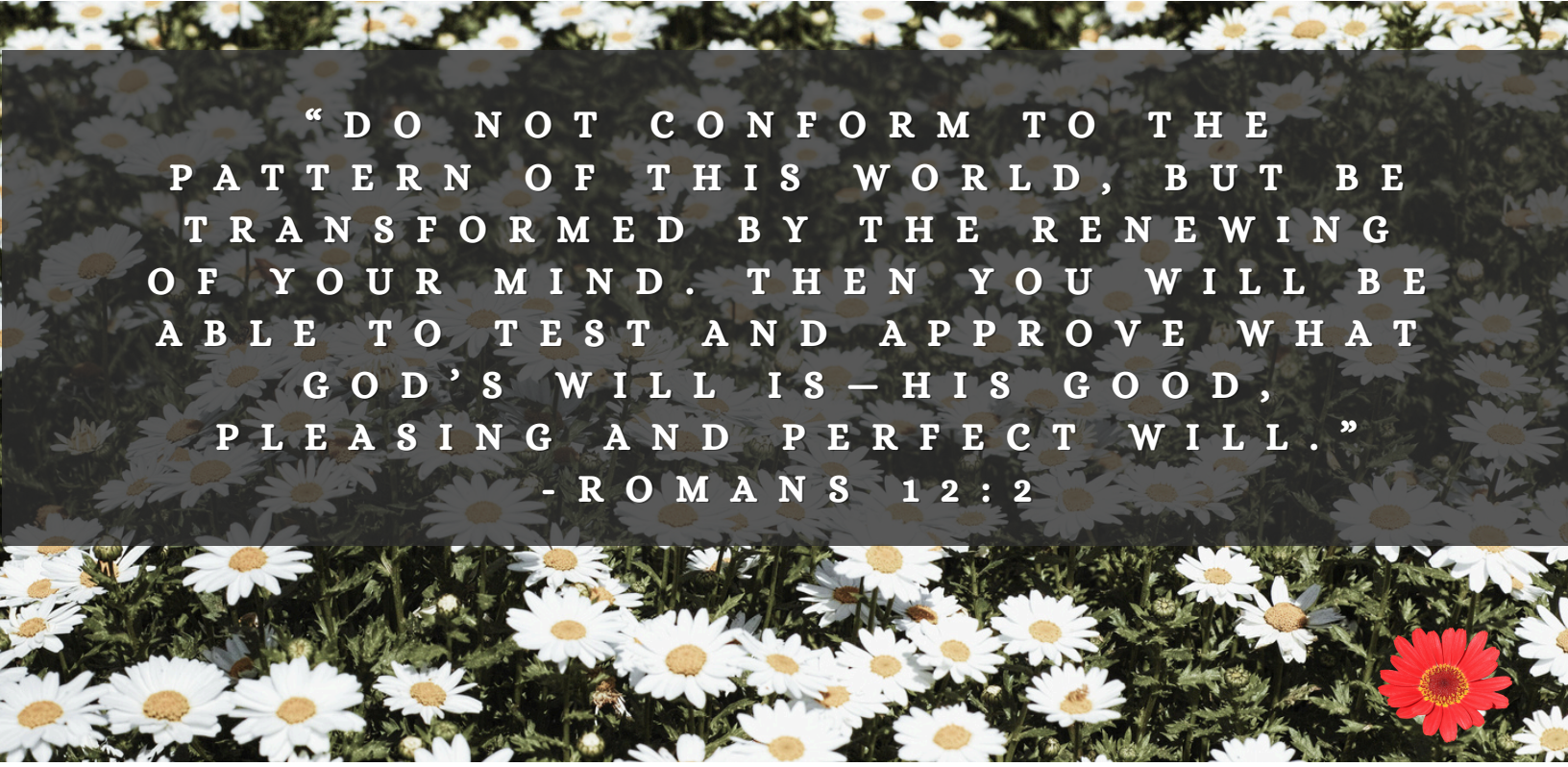
I had been deceived.

I share this with you so that you understand I am not coming from a place of judgment. I've had to take this kind of plank out of my own eye. And I'm forever grateful to the friends who stuck their neck out to confront me on it. If you're still on the fence about Gentle Parenting, I encourage you to take a solid month and put it to the test.

Unfollow all the accounts, tune out all the influencers, turn off the podcasts, abstain from using the language of Gentle Parenting, and just spend an entire month dwelling in the Word alone. Pray for the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom from the Scripture and guide your parenting. Open your Bible with your children and read it to them daily.

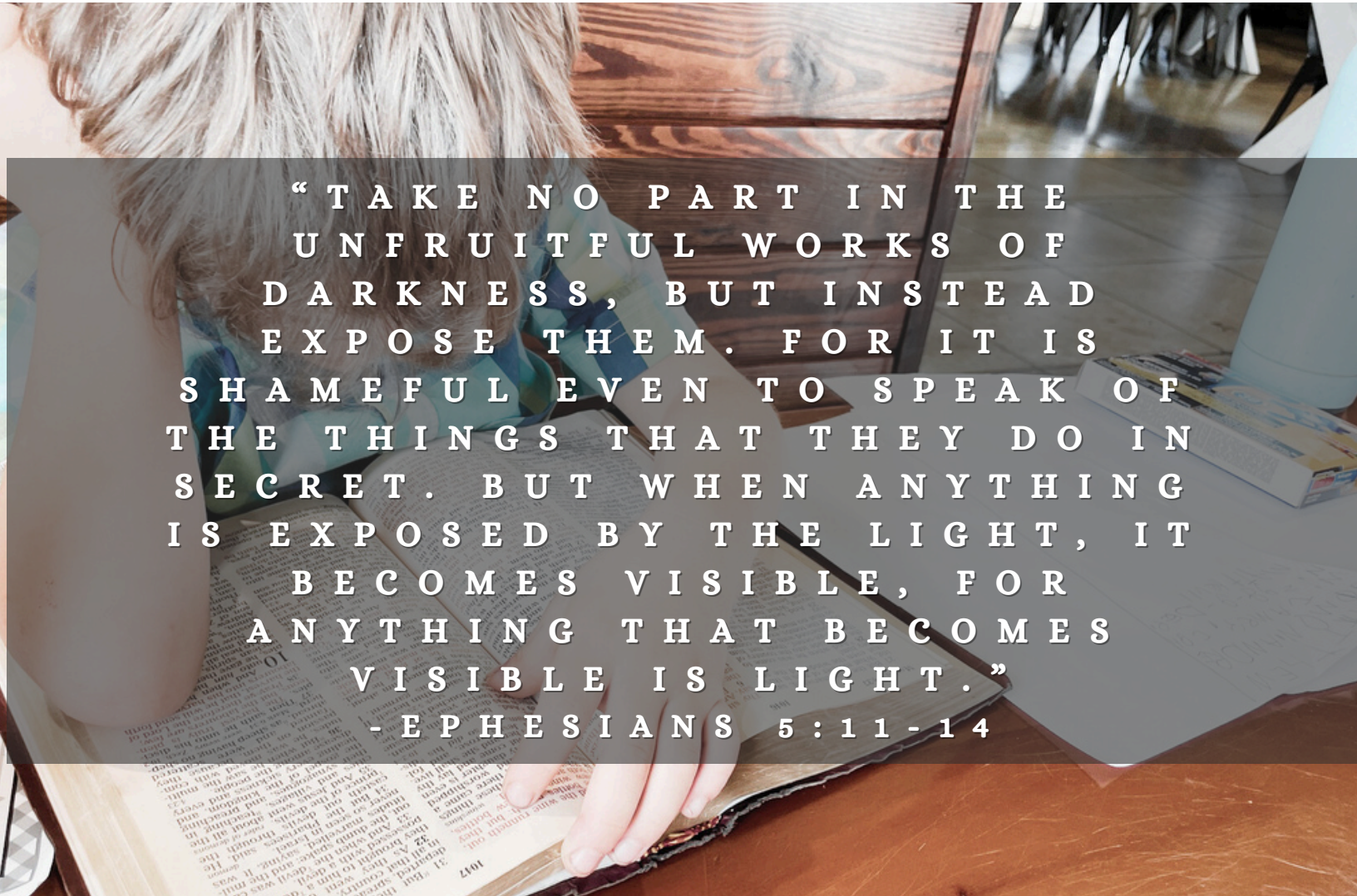
“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world.”
-1 John 4:1

Test this spirit. Biblical parenting should not look the same as the world.



“DO NOT CONFORM TO THE
PATTERN OF THIS WORLD, BUT BE
TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING
OF YOUR MIND. THEN YOU WILL BE
ABLE TO TEST AND APPROVE WHAT
GOD'S WILL IS—HIS GOOD,
PLEASING AND PERFECT WILL.”
- ROMANS 12:2

Instead of chewing on the counsel of Gentle Parenting gurus, chew on the Word of God. Instead of trying to sift through clever posts, relatable reels, and quippy quotes online, sift through the abundant riches of the Scripture. Savor the Sacred Writings where our Heavenly Father revealed Himself to us and related to us as a parent to a child. Study His disciplinary methods until you've forgotten those of trendy influencers. Drink deeply of the Holy Text that makes you wise for salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). When you share any counsel with others, let it be directly from the Word and not from the world.



“ TAKE NO PART IN THE
UNFRUITFUL WORKS OF
DARKNESS, BUT INSTEAD
EXPOSE THEM. FOR IT IS
SHAMEFUL EVEN TO SPEAK OF
THE THINGS THAT THEY DO IN
SECRET. BUT WHEN ANYTHING
IS EXPOSED BY THE LIGHT, IT
BECOMES VISIBLE, FOR
ANYTHING THAT BECOMES
VISIBLE IS LIGHT.”
- EPHESIANS 5:11-14

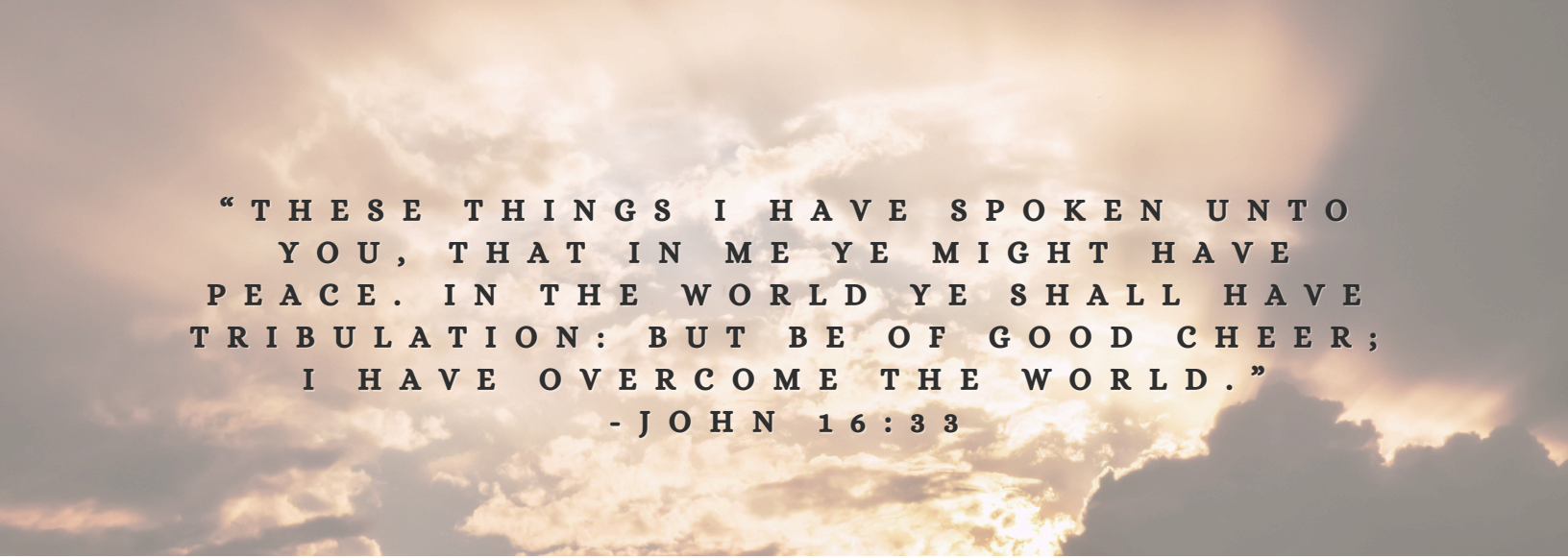
If someone you love is caught up in Gentle Parenting and you're looking for ways to help them see the deception, first go to the Lord in prayer and ask that He convict them and remove the scales from their eyes. And remember that *“all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work”* (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

It is truly my hope that this book has helped highlight some of the Scripture you can point them to. You could offer to read any information they'd like to send you and ask if they would do the same in order to open up dialogue. Or offer to take a social media break together to tune out influencers and check in with one another regularly to see what the Lord is teaching you both during this break.

Be advised that Gentle Parenting influencers teach their followers how to respond to concerns like yours about their parenting methods. They're instructed to remain confident in their decision to parent this way and not to let your criticism get to them. They're told that while you probably have the best intentions, you simply haven't seen the latest research on brain development and the newest interpretations of the rod verses by modern Hebrew scholars, so they should just have grace on you for your lack of understanding. They're encouraged to come prepared with the victories they see in their ways, and that if they can't trust you to model the same type of parenting alongside them, that they should advise you to “just let them handle it,” which in essence will only cut you out of their lives even more. And it's packaged up with a feel-good message of “just remember the only opinions that matter are God's and your children's, and they already adore you!” (Flourishing Homes & Families.)²⁴⁹⁻²⁵¹

This is a form of manipulation similar to that of cult leaders.

Pray the Lord would open their eyes.



“ T H E S E T H I N G S I H A V E S P O K E N U N T O
Y O U , T H A T I N M E Y E M I G H T H A V E
P E A C E . I N T H E W O R L D Y E S H A L L H A V E
T R I B U L A T I O N : B U T B E O F G O O D C H E E R ;
I H A V E O V E R C O M E T H E W O R L D . ”
- J O H N 1 6 : 3 3

It can feel overwhelming sometimes, parenting in such an anti-parent world, seeing so much deception taking root before our eyes, and knowing what this means for the unbelieving world. *Take heart - Jesus has overcome the world!* And may this give you a sense of renewed urgency to share the gospel! **Jesus is coming back soon!**

Be encouraged by His promises! *“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. **Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.** And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of His mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of His coming.”* 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12

The deception behind Gentle Parenting is just one of the many vines sprouting from the root of the spirit of the Antichrist. But he won't be revealed until the restrainer is out of the way, and what a glorious day this will be!

*“For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. **Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.** Therefore encourage one another with these words.”* 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

And all these things point to the fact that our Blessed Hope is so very near! Jesus is coming back soon to redeem His bride! Our response to seeing all these signs coming to pass should be to share the gospel with urgency, to remain rooted in the Word, and to take no part in the darkness but expose it with light.

And look up! Jesus is coming back soon! Come Lord!

In light of all this, I encourage you to reflect back on the first question we asked at the very beginning of this journey.

What is your parenting goal?

Is it to raise children who are happy? Successful? Well-adjusted and emotionally mature? Well-liked by their peers? Moral and good?

Or is it perhaps to raise disciples? To raise children who fear and love the Lord? Children who are anchored in the Word of God to keep them from being tossed by the waves of false doctrines? Children who understand sin, mercy, and grace? Children who know that you love them, but know that God loves them even more? Children who understand the gospel so deeply that it pours out of their mouths everywhere you take them? Children who have a heart to reach the lost and spread the gospel to the ends of the earth?

“ GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PROCLAIM
THE GOSPEL TO THE WHOLE CREATION . ”

- MARK 16 : 15

“ AND HOW ARE THEY TO HEAR
WITHOUT SOMEONE PREACHING ?
... FAITH COMES FROM HEARING ,
AND HEARING THROUGH THE
WORD OF CHRIST . ”

- ROMANS 10 : 14 , 17

“ AND THE EFFECT OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS
WILL BE PEACE ,
AND THE RESULT OF
RIGHTEOUSNESS ,
QUIETNESS AND SECURITY
FOREVER ”

- ISAIAH 32 : 17



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Edwards, Kimberly, Family Standing on the Fault Line, Cover Art, April 2024.

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1. Monochrome portrait of American psychologist Diana Blumberg Baumrind from 1965. Unknown author - Children magazine of the United States Children's Bureau, preserved by Cornell University Library's HEARTH project - (1965-12). "The Authors". Children 12 (6): 210. ISSN 0009-4064.

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3. Blavatsky and Olcott in 1888. Theosophical Society.

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9. Emblem of the Soviet Union, sickle and hammer Soviet Union nation symbol on the stone wall.

10. Salle de la Reformation. The official opening of the League of Nations. Fridtjof Nansen is sitting second from the left in row four, before 15 November 1920. https://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-nb_nansen_2495

11. Edwards, Kimberly. Sunset Beach Family with Rays of Light, April 2024.

12. Edwards, Kimberly. Mom Baby Wearing with Arm on Toddler with Rays of Light, April 2024.
13. Edwards, Kimberly. Dad Holding Toddler on the Bed with Rays of Light, April 2024.
14. Edwards, Kimberly. Toddler and Mom Coloring with Rays of Light, April 2024.
15. Edwards, Kimberly. Dark Angel with Rays of Light, April 2024.
16. Edwards, Kimberly. The Elephant in the Room, April 2024.
17. Edwards, Kimberly. Reading Bible Barefoot in the Sand, April 2024.
18. Edwards, Kimberly. Toddler Reading Bible on Cozy Blanket, April 2024.
19. Edwards, Kimberly. Rays of Light Shining Through Ancient Oak Trees with Spanish Moss, April 2024.
20. Edwards, Kimberly. Nebuchadnezzar's Punishment, April 2024.
21. Edwards, Kimberly. Nebuchadnezzar's Restored, April 2024.
22. Edwards, Kimberly. COEXIST Group Holding Hands, April 2024.
23. Edwards, Kimberly. Boy In Tutu with Sign That Says 'My Truth', April 2024.
24. Edwards, Kimberly. Woman Reading Bible Barefoot, April 2024.
25. Edwards, Kimberly. Fingers Crossed Behind the Back, April 2024.
26. Edwards, Kimberly. Connecting The Dots, April 2024.
27. Edwards, Kimberly. Wolf In Sheep's Clothing, April 2024.
28. Edwards, Kimberly. Smoke and Mirror with the Scales Falling Off the Eyes, April 2024.
29. Edwards, Kimberly. One Red Lilly in the Field of White Lillies, April 2024.
30. Edwards, Kimberly. Boy Reading Bible at the Table, April 2024.

31. Front cover art for the book The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care. The book cover art copyright is believed to belong to Benjamin Spock. Source <http://www.raptisrarebooks.com/product/the-common-sense-book-of-baby-and-child-care-benjamin-spock-first-edition-signed-1946/>

Remaining unnumbered images: Canva.