

Proverbs 19:18

Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Train your children today: tomorrow may be too late. Do not waste a single day. You do not have forever. They quickly grow beyond training, and then they are gone from your control. Efforts to train or chasten then will only provoke them. It will be too late.

God gave them to you helpless and open to instruction. He gave you only a window of time to train them, which closes quickly. Then you must pray for a miracle, which He has not promised to give, if you chose to ignore or reject His wisdom earlier in their lives.

Our proverb makes two strong points. Child training and chastening must be done early in life, and they must be done severely without regard for foolish pity or tearful appeals.

Child training is not an option; it is a commandment (22:6; Eph 6:4). Chastening is not an option; it is a commandment (23:13-14). Chastening is the enforcement of training.

Chasten. To inflict disciplinary or corrective punishment on; to visit with affliction for the purpose of moral improvement; to correct, discipline, chastise.

The corrective punishment God teaches is by the use of the rod (13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15). As horses are trained to run fast with a whip, or riding crop; and as asses are kept controlled and made useful by bridles; so a fool is corrected from foolishness by a rod (26:3; 10:13). Some stripes on the back are a wonderful training method, as many generations of sober Americans can testify (19:29; 20:30). See the comments on 22:15.

Two generations have neglected chastening, and youth today are given to pride, selfishness, laziness, rebellion, and social dysfunction. Traits not allowed fifty years ago in any children are now accepted as the norm. Public, academic, and employment standards must be reduced regularly to accommodate an undisciplined generation.

Children, daughters included, will be well behaved when they are old, if we train them when young (22:15). We must chasten them *betimes* – early in life, while there is hope, before it is too late (13:24). Dear parent, get a strong sense of urgency today!

Betimes. At an early time, period, or season; early in the year; early in life. In good time, in due time; while there is yet time, before it is too late.

Chastening is God's method for training your children for godly and successful lives, but it must be done early in life. If you wait too long, children become hardened in rebellion, established in their own thoughts, formed in their own habits, resentful of corporal correction, and able to leave the home and live on their own. As we know from the delay of civil punishment, the hearts of men become set to do wickedly (Eccl 8:11)

You must begin when they are very young, and then only reminders will be needed later. Self-discipline and right conduct can be taught early, and they must be taught early. Every year of life makes it more difficult to change habits and attitudes. Train them now, while they are young. Consistent chastening early will do more good than harder and more frequent chastening later. The earlier you begin, the less is required. Start today!

Training can begin in infancy, for we read that Hannah delivered Samuel permanently to the priests at Shiloh immediately after his weaning (I Sam 1:24-28). He was prepared to live away from home, follow instructions, and worship God from a very, very early age.

We must chasten early, and we must also chasten severely. Do not let their tears and crying move you, for children quickly learn to beg, plead, promise, cry, and scream to avoid discipline. Ignore his tears now to save him and you much worse crying later. It is ungodly pity that hinders us from doing our duty for their happiness and good. Eli's choice to compromise with his sons brought infinitely more pain to him and his entire family than any short difficulty that chastening them would have caused. Consider it!

No good parent enjoys chastening his child, for he would much rather hold him tenderly and enjoy his happy company. But the goal of saving him from hell in life must drive us in our duty. True love is not just hugs and kisses: true love is correction; withholding correction is hatred (13:24). If you spare the rod, you hate your son, for you are creating future trouble for him; and this choice will come back to haunt both of you (29:15). David chose to spare the rod on Adonijah, and it cost his son his life (I Kings 1:6; 2:23).

Exalting friendship with children will lead to problems, for it will be hard to chasten with the right consistency and severity. You must first be a parent. Chasten them, and you will bring rest to your soul; reject the tempting and momentary ease now when they are young, so you can take perpetual ease later when your chastening has earned it (29:17).

If you have young children, there is hope today. Do not plan on tomorrow, for your case may soon be hopeless. If you have been negligent in the past, then confess your sin fully to God and beg Him for mercy for the children already past the point of no return. He does forgive and can mercifully help you recover the lost opportunity (Joel 2:25-27).

We are God's sons by adoption through Jesus Christ (Gal 4:4-7), and He proves His love by correcting us when we disobey. He does pity our frame (Ps 103:13-14), but He chastens and scourges every adopted son (Heb 12:6). Chastening proves His love, for only bastards are ignored to go their own way (Heb 12:7-8). If you receive painful results in your life for sin, on the inside or outside, you can know you are greatly loved!