

RESPECT FOR PARENTS

(Part 3 of 5)

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The Proverbs give a considerable amount of instruction concerning the meaning of “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Although many families are so fragmented today and the raising of the children is left up to professional day care institutions, what the wise man wrote is still effective if applied by those who love the children and have their best interests at heart. One example is Proverbs 19:18, “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.” The Proverbs do not say, “Spare the rod and spoil the child,” but they do say, “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Prov. 13:24). Some can look back on their childhood and realize that they were brought up in a home where there was plenty of love. The tempering of the use of the rod along with reproof, showing wherein the child has erred, yield the desired effect, but failure to correct is shameful, “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Prov. 29:15). More about the effect of the rod to produce wisdom is stated in Proverbs 22:15, “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” Corporal punishment of a child is a heavy burden for a loving parent, and the Proverbs speak to the feelings of the one responsible for it, “Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell. My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine” (Prov. 23:13-15). Maybe this is new material for a lot of parents today, and it goes right to the heart of both how to develop wholesome “respect for parents” and serves as an explanation as to why “respect for parents” is lacking in most homes.

If I may be granted a moment of personal indulgence, years ago when we accompanied anywhere from twenty to forty children from the Gragg Avenue Church of Christ to Mid-South Youth Camp in Henderson, Tennessee, over the space of about ten years, it was my privilege to teach the teenage class twice daily under the pavilion. From year to year those classes ranged in attendance from about twenty-five to as many as seventy-five or eighty. On one occasion I recall the teenagers complaining about how rough they had it at home. It was gratifying that none of our young people ever so complained. Maybe their parents effectively had acquainted them with the rod of correction. But, I asked all the children if they

thought their parents were tough on them and a number of hands went up. Then I asked them all to project many years into the future and answer if they thought they would be less stringent or more strict with their own children. They were unanimous in indicating that they would be stricter in their home than they were presently treated in their parents' home. I saw in that children who respected their parents and who knew how to one day gain the proper respect from their children the Lord desires.