

Parent Update

Examining Education from
a Christian Perspective



The **Seven Laws of Teaching**

Beyond the Behavior

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a behavior stems from a
development deficiency or willful
disobedience. By relying on
biblical wisdom and practical
strategies, parents can guide their
children in a Christlike manner.**

Christian parents are called to nurture their children with love, discipline, and wisdom, offering a picture of Christ's love. This ministry of mirroring the Lord requires the wisdom to discern whether a behavior stems from willful disobedience or a need for character development. Misinterpreting a developmental hurdle as deliberate defiance can harm a child emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. Parents must discern whether a behavior stems from a developmental deficiency or willful disobedience. By relying on biblical wisdom and practical strategies, parents can guide their children in a Christlike manner.

The Biblical Call to Discernment

One of the greatest challenges in parenting is distinguishing willful defiance from immaturity. Not all acts of disobedience stem from rebellion; some arise from a lack of understanding or self-regulation. Spiritual discernment helps parents recognize whether a behavior stems from cognitive, emotional, or developmental challenges. Children, just like adults, have areas in which wisdom, patience, and guidance are necessary for refinement.

Recognizing the difference requires spiritual discernment. Difficulty managing emotions, impulsive behavior, or a lack of perseverance may stem from developmental hurdles rather than intentional defiance. In such cases, the child needs instruction, encouragement, and a model of Christlike patience.

Jesus met individuals with both truth and grace. Parents should follow this example and be slow to anger while seeking to understand (James 1:19). Biblical discipline should aim for training and restoration rather than punishment (Hebrews 12:11). Parents must ask, "Is this a matter of the heart needing correction, or a moment for teaching and strengthening character?" By cultivating discernment, parents can avoid provoking their children to anger (Ephesians 6:4) and instead guide them toward biblical growth—training them not only in right behavior but also in righteousness, wisdom, and a heart that seeks after God.

Disobedience vs. Character Training

Disobedience is a willful choice to defy authority, as warned against in Ephesians 6:1–3. However, behaviors such as inattentiveness, impulsivity, or difficulty following directions may stem from circumstances beyond a child's control rather than from rebellion.

Parents should ask, “Does this behavior persist across different settings? Is it influenced by external factors like overstimulation, hunger, or fatigue?” Addressing these needs first enables a child to process guidance and work toward obedience. Children misbehave for various reasons, including seeking autonomy, testing boundaries, or frustration with their inadequacies. Recognizing these motives helps parents respond effectively and with compassion.

Practical Strategies for Discernment

Obedience is necessary and biblical; however, discerning whether a child’s behavior stems from disobedience or another factor requires careful observation and wisdom. Parents can observe and document behaviors to better understand patterns. Is the problem behavior consistent across different settings, such as at home, school, and church? Does it increase in specific environments, like noisy or overstimulating places? Parents would be wise to identify and chart specific behaviors to form an accurate assessment rather than relying on general feelings or impressions.

Once the root cause or antecedent of a behavior is identified, parents can evaluate what the child might be trying to accomplish—whether he is seeking autonomy, testing boundaries, gaining attention, avoiding a situation, or feeling overwhelmed by external stimuli. Physical needs like hunger, fatigue, or a disrupted routine can also play a role in behavior. By recognizing these underlying motivations, parents can address behaviors more effectively and compassionately. Meeting a child’s physical and emotional needs equips him to listen, process guidance, and work toward obedience, ultimately helping him develop self-regulation skills.

Proactive parenting is key. Anticipate challenges and come prepared with tools to support the child before behaviors escalate. Use sensory tools in overstimulating environments, maintain a consistent routine, make dietary changes, and set clear boundaries. Proactive parents create a sense of safety through structure and consistency while also reinforcing positive behaviors. Teach accountability and equip children with strategies to manage overwhelming emotions and self-regulate. Model and help children practice appropriate behaviors. Ultimately, proactive parents rely on God’s Word, teaching their children to trust in Him as their most powerful source of support. By fostering a Christ-centered approach to discipline and character development, parents can guide their children to grow in wisdom, self-control, and obedience.

Responding Biblically to Disobedience

Prayer is the most important tool for discerning between disobedience and a need for character training. Parents should seek wisdom and respond with consistent, patient, Christlike correction. Colossians 3:21 warns against provoking children to anger but encourages discipline that fosters growth.

A simple way to begin correction is by asking, “Are you glorifying God with your actions and attitude?” Biblical discipline sets clear expectations and lovingly points children toward Christ. For children with disabilities, expectations must be adapted to their God-given abilities and developmental stage.

Character Development

How can parents instill godly character? Intentional guidance is key. Teaching integrity, patience, responsibility, and self-discipline happens through daily interactions, and modeling these virtues is just as important as teaching them. Romans 5:3-4 reminds us that trials build character, and parents should use mistakes as opportunities to teach discernment and maturity. In moments of disobedience, stopping to address behaviors immediately reinforces lessons in wisdom and self-control. Even in cases of willful defiance, thoughtful consequences and reflection can shape a child’s heart. The way parents respond to challenges significantly impacts their child’s spiritual growth.

Conclusion

Parents must approach behavior with biblical wisdom, prayer, and grace to distinguish between developmental struggles and disobedience. However, a parent’s role goes beyond understanding and discipline—they are called to shepherd their child’s heart, guiding them toward Christ with patience and love. As Proverbs 22:6 reminds us, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

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