

Practical Disciplining of Children

By: Drs. Ching-Ching Ruan & Elissa Lin Rathe

(Saturday, April 16, 7-9:30PM)

1. **How Do We Define Success?** (*Elissa*)
2. **Boundaries: The Law of Sowing and Reaping.** (*Ching-Ching*)
3. **Lose the Battle to Win the War/Choose Your Battles.** (*Elissa*)
4. **Let Your Child “Win”:** Healthy children need to rebel in order to separate him/herself from you. So, let your child “win” at something that really bothers you (but will not harm the child when s/he wins). (*Elissa*)
5. **Avoid/Prevent Power Struggles.** (*Elissa*)
6. **Privileges and Responsibilities.** (*Elissa*)
7. **Accountability and Practicing Faith in Everyday Life.** (*Ching-Ching*)

Introduction:

We will be addressing practical disciplining ideas of children tonight. Ching-Ching will address the Law of Sowing and Reaping as ways of helping our children to take responsibilities for their choices and actions, while minimizing use of emotional manipulation on the parents’ part. We will also address providing opportunity for your child and teen to express his/her preferences and who they are, so as to avoid power struggles, especially as they grow into teens.

Lastly, Ching-Ching will also address how to help we as parents to be held accountable for how we parent our children.

1. How Do We Define Success? (*Elissa*)

- Proposing Success as your child having a **productive** and **balanced life**:
 - Spiritually, mentally, emotionally, interpersonally, physically, and as responsible citizens.
 - Possessing godly character and moral values (loving God, loving themselves, loving others), with priorities in the following order: 1) Personal relationship with God. 2) Relationship with her/his spouse. 3) Relationship with his/her children. 4) Career, Ministry, Extended family.
 - Living out his/her potential.
 - Being fulfilled and content (“For godliness with contentment is great gain” – I Timothy 6:6).
 - Caring for others’ needs (Philippians 2:4, I Corinthians 10:24).
 - Able to be financially independent (I Thessalonians 4:12)
- More on balancing the Superego, the Ego and the Id.

2. Boundaries: The Law of Sowing and Reaping (*Ching-Ching*):

Before I start-

- I have the privilege to be invited to speak about this topic. I don't know it all. Some of you have children who are older than my own children and I will learn from you.
- With that said, **I am NOT in the position of being an expert.** Not at all. I consider it as a journey that we walk together and we support and encourage one another.
- Professional and Personal introduction

What I Contribute-

Part I: The Law of Sowing and Reaping

- The definition and the Biblical perspectives
- The benefits of the law
- The formula of the Law
- What needs to attend when implementing the Law for parents
- Suggestions and guidelines on consequences

Part II: Promoting the Child's Internal Motivation & Practicing faith in practical ways

- Rethink "Rewards and Consequences"
- The importance of promoting the child's internal motivation
- Practical ways of living the faith out as parents hold themselves accountable

The Law of Sowing and Reaping

The Law of sowing and reaping is illustrated in Matthew 25:14-30

The Parable of the Bags of Gold

14 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. 15 To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag,[a] each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. 17 So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. 18 But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

20 The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.'

21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

22 “The man with two bags of gold also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.’

23 “His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

24 “Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’

26 “His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

28 ““So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags. 29 For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Teaching the Reality Principle

- Based on the scripture indicated here, **life works on reality consequences**. We know that if our children do not submit their assigned homework from the school, they may receive a bad grade on their report card. The life principle works like this “if I don’t do my responsibility, I will face negative consequences later based on the poor choices I make.
- Parents run into a big problem when they do not distinguish between psychological or negative relational consequences versus reality consequences.
- **Parents run into a big problem when they do not distinguish between psychological, negative consequences versus reality consequences.**
- Psychological consequences are such as holding on to anger to against our children, not forgiving, sending guilt messages, nagging and withdrawing love. Psychological consequences don’t motivate people to change.

Benefits of Teaching the Law of Sowing and Reaping

1. The positive side of the law of sowing and reaping shows that **God is pleased when we invest our talents and lives to reap good fruit.**
2. The positive side of learning this law gives us a reasonable sense of power and control over our lives. This is what God intended for us.

3. In several places in the Bible, in particular, in Proverbs, the scripture shows that effort, diligence, and responsibility pay off.

- The law of sowing and reaping teaches children “self-control” (Galatians 5:23) “gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”
- Teaching children to be “self-responsible”

Any Negative side of learning this law?

The negative side of the law of sowing and reaping gives us a healthy fear of bad things. **A healthy respect for consequences keeps us living in reality and moving in a good direction.**

- If we don’t teach children about the Law, imagine this. Children don’t take responsibility for their part. There are no consequences of the lack of their efforts and responsibilities. And at the same time, children don’t fear laziness, irresponsibility and other character problems. **Both conditions result in suffering: the loss of good realities and the encountering go bad ones.**

To mater the law, we as parents, need to know the goal is to balance freedom, choices, and consequences.

For parents, the goal is not to control the children to make them do what you want. The goal is to give them the choice to do what they want, and make it so painful to do the wrong thing they will not want to.

Parents are letting them choose, but making the law of sowing and reaping has reality.

If children sow to irresponsibility, they will reap pain. And if they sow to responsible behavior, they will reap the benefits and want to choose that path.

Freedom = Responsibility = Consequences = Love

The child has to have the choice of one or the other. That is the essence of freedom and the root of self-control. Self-control doesn’t exist without freedom and choices.

The parents’ task is to give the proper amount of freedom and choices and then manage the consequence.

For children, all freedom, not held responsible, later will develop character problems and ends up being irresponsible and doing unloving things.

For children, who are held responsible but are not free to choose, they’re slaves and robots. They will not choose lovely and only comply and feel resentful.

The same goes to parents. Parents give freedom, require responsibility, render consequences and be loving throughout.

Freedom goes by age and the child's maturity. If parents don't give children freedom at all, children will find their own from somewhere else.

Age and content change, the law remains the same. The formula is to balance FREEDOM, CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES.

Interference of Carrying Out the Law

The problem of the "Bail Out"

Consequences transfer the need to be responsible from the parent to the child. A common problem for parents is that they have difficulty allowing their children to suffer consequences. The natural tendency is to bail them out. We parents often get in the way. We parents run interference by interrupting the consequences before we can teach our children the lesson they were designed to teach. Too often children don't learn until later in life, when no one will bail them out.

Therefore, to do this, parents need to be comfortable with letting the child suffer.

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:11)

If parents find it difficult to allow your child to suffer consequences, be sure to find someone to help you through your own resistance. You may need to deal with your own hurt from the past, your own lack of boundaries, or codependent patterns learned in childhood.

A few questions are helpful for parents to figure out what to do in parenting situations:

- Whose problem is this?
- What can I do to help my child experience the problem (balancing Truth and Grace)
- What am I doing to keep my child from experiencing the problem?

The importance of balancing Truth and Grace

What is Grace? Grace: support, resources, love, empathy, compassion and forgiveness. Grace is relational.

What is Truth? Truth: Structure of life, the rules, the right things to do or to comply.

Emphasize the role of empathy for the child who makes a bad child as a result of suffering consequences. It is important for parents to empathize their children's loss when they make bad choices. If parents are not empathetic about their children's loss, children could easily resent the statements made by their parents and focus more on resenting the parent(s) who make(s) them feel bad than on correcting the behavior that got them into this mess.

Suggestions for the Reality of Consequences

- **Make the consequences a natural outflow of the crime.** E.g. If I don't tell my parents where I'm going, I may stay home next time.
- **Save consequences for serious offenses.**
- **Give immediate consequences.** The younger the child, the more immediate the consequences needs to be.
- **Stay away from emotional consequences and effect reality consequences.** Anger, guilt, and shame do not teach children to do better. Feeling the pain of loss of computer or video games time teaches much better.
- **Use relational consequences only if they concern your own feelings.** Talk to your child about how you feel hurt emotionally. E.g. It makes me feel sad when you talk to me this way. I love you, but I don't love the way you talk to me disrespectfully. Can you have a different way of talking to me? Do give your children a cold shoulder.
- **Think of consequences as protecting yourself and the rest of the family from the behavior of the child.** For instance, we don't bicker when we eat dinner together. If you continue to choose bickering, you need to go back to your room and when you calm down you can join us for dinner.
- **Preserve choice as much as possible before jumping to consequences so quickly.** Don't we all love the fact that we're given more than only one option?! Giving choices.
- **Make sure there is NOT a good reason a child is misbehaving before invoking consequences.** *A child may be acting out pain, hurt feelings, powerlessness, or some other emotional state that needs to be connected with.*
- Be sure to talk to the child and ask about the misbehavior.

3. **Lose the Battle to Win the War/Choose Your Battles:** (Elissa)

It is prudent to let go of things that bother you, especially when it is your preference, taste or style. Step back and look at the big picture: Will your child really go down a path of self-destruction if s/he doesn't do exactly what you are telling him/her right now? If the answer is a "Most likely, no," then let it go...remember to preserve the emotional relationship is more important to make your child into a clone of you or to "undo" the damage done to you by your parents.

For example: If your child is messy, have him/her contain her/his mess in their own room. Whatever is left in the "common/public area" can either be confiscated for a period of time or be picked up by you and piled in your child's room...

Both the parents and children resent having to nag, or be nagged at. Set up clear consequences for when your child "chooses" to incur a natural consequence of his/her behavior.

4. **Let Your Child "Win"** (Elissa):

- It's important to **provide space** for your child to assert who s/he is and of his/her desires and preferences, so your child can feel that s/he has a voice.
- Healthy teens need to rebel in order to separate him/herself from you. So, let your teen "win" at something that really bothers you (but will not harm the child when s/he wins). For example: A teenager paints her nails black and wears black make-up. The parent says, "I really don't like you wearing black make-up. It gives off a message of intimidation to others and you can lose some friends this way." However, the parent doesn't force the teen to take off the ugly make-up, and invites the teen to do some sort of activity that both the parent and the teen enjoy, in order to convey unconditional acceptance.
- Kids have to rebel and win at something, so give them something to win at! I've worked with parents who forbade their child from dating while s/he is young, and the child shares that s/he is attracted to people of the same gender - the very thing s/he knows her/his parents are deadly against...

5. **Avoid/Prevent Power Struggles** (*Elissa*): By setting clear expectations and their natural consequences, so it isn't a struggle between the parents and their children. Rather, it's a choice the child is choosing, with its consequences...

An example is to inform your teen that s/he has to attend a Bible teaching church. You can give him/her a few choices of which church to choose from, and s/he gets to choose which church for him/her to attend...your teen does not necessarily have to attend your church, but s/he is expected to attend a Bible teaching and life-giving church.

6. **Privileges and Responsibilities** (*Elissa*):

Your children's "Rights" are:

- You will provide food, shelter and clothing.
- You are legally responsible for them until they turn 18.
- You will not abuse them physically, emotionally, sexually, or spiritually.
- You will do your best to love them unconditionally.
- You will guide them to the best of your ability.

Other than these above, everything you provide are "Privileges."

They can expect these rights but need to **earn** privileges.

"Privileges" are:

- Extra-curricular activities.
- Possessing electronic gadgets.
- Being given allowance.

- Extension of curfews.

Each year, on your child's birthday, give increased privilege as well as increased responsibility, at the rate of two privileges to one responsibility.

Examples of these Privileges could be: Being allowed to walk home by him/herself; Can hang out after school with friends; can stay up half or an hour later than before; Can play with electronic gadgets after completion of school work; Can attend a church of his/her own choosing from the list you've given him/her; Can have play-dates; Can have a sleep over; learning to drive; Having access to an automobile, etc.

Examples of Responsibilities can be: Clean up after her/himself; Keep his/her own room clean; Doing her/his own laundry; Set up or clean up dining table for meals; Doing dishes; Cleaning common areas; Sort and/or take out garbage; Sweep/vacuum/mop the floors; Cooking family meal; Balance bank statements; Driving her/himself to school/activities; Driving younger siblings to school/activities, etc

See what your child's talents are and allow them to choose their chores/responsibilities in this order: 1) What interests them; 2) What is their strength; 3) Whatever is left over that needs to be covered.

7. Accountability and Practicing Faith in Everyday Life (Ching-Ching):

Part II: Promoting the Child's Internal Motivation & Practicing faith in practical ways

Talking about the law of sowing and reaping is not complete in parenting. **When children are young, a good amount of portion in parenting is to help our children develop ownership over their behaviors. Young children have less mature motives, comparatively to older children, because their motives are such as fear of pain and consequences, which is a healthy thing to redirect them to follow their parents' rules and principles.**

BUT, Parenting IS more than that! Parenting involves more than helping a child develop ownership over her behavior. Parents want to see their children to obey them, to make responsible decisions because children are motivated to do the right things for the right reasons, not simply to avoid consequences.

Little Johnny will clean up his room because he won't get a movie that weekend unless he does. But when little Johnny turns to Big Johnny 20 years old, he will need other reasons for keeping his room neat.

Rethink "Rewards and Consequences".

Rewards and consequences can be very helpful and influential to shape up the child's behaviors or even characters. **Behavior dictated from the outside marks a child, not a young adult.**

Bible teaches us that **in our spiritual journey, we need a tutor called the law until we have entered a faith relationship with God and we are motivated by higher principles.**

Galatians 3:24-25

²⁴ So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

The example of my child on eating broccoli. She told her pediatrician that her favorite food is broccoli. She wants to eat broccoli not because her mommy, daddy or grandma tell her. She wants it because she thinks that's healthy for her.

Therefore, another parenting tactics is to promote, develop the child's internal motivation to make the responsible choices for the right reasons.

Developing conscious. That will be another series.

Conscious is the heart centered in Jesus Christ. The conscious is being set apart and know the truth.

Practical ways of living the faith out as parents hold themselves accountable.

Rules bring convictions.

Living OUT your faith= ACCOUNTABILITY

Practical ways:

Praying for your children. Daily.

Praying for their school teachers, their Sunday school teachers, any important adults your children have interaction with.

Praying out loud with your children.

Praying with your children for those who need prayers. Use every opportunity.

Reading scriptures and APPLYING them in everyday life. Example: the story of the prodigal son was discussed this week as we encouraged our children not to give up on praying for someone because God never gives us up.

Serving others is FAITH IN ACTION.

Character building:

Conflict Resolutions

Calm down and get separated
Thinking of the other person's interests

Philippians 2:3

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.

Luke 6:31

"Do to others as you would have them do to you".

Relationship matters

- **We can't control our children, but we can control what kind of relationship** I want with my children. In a way, the better quality of our relationship with our children would influence our children's decision making.
- **We don't discipline our children without first developing a relationship with them.**
- God is a relational God.
- False ideas for many Chinese parents- Kids come first **WRONG!**
- The right priority:
 - Relationship with God
 - Relationship with spouse
 - Relationship with children
- Detachment and Conditional love are the enemies of the foundation of Shalom and Godly love.
- Detached parents may care deeply about their children, but both parents and children are unable to feel true close and intimate feelings. They love from a distance.
- The parents with conditional love isn't constant. When a parent's love is conditional, he or she connects to the child only when the child is good.
- **Think about attachment. Will my words, actions and attitude bring the parent-child attachment closer or further away from each other?**
- **Expressing affection, speaking the words of Encouragement** and expressing LOVE in words. I say "I love you", out of my own comfort zone.

Final words:

1. I am not perfect. I am a work in progress.
2. Raising my children prayerfully and intentionally. With the mindset of accountability.
3. Remain committed to my spouse. Two parents need to be on the same page when it comes to parenting. When marriage is not being taken care of, children suffer.
4. Building community here right in this church. Prayer partners. Praying for each other's children on a regular basis. for her oldest son five years ago and
5. And I hope today for CACW church, is just the beginning step to have such dialogues on parenting and the first but last opportunity to bear each other's burden on carrying out this great mission.
6. The most important influence on a child's heart isn't education. It's salvation.

Resources:

1. Focus on the Family has a lot of resources for families:
<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting.aspx>
2. Touch Life Mission has possible resources in Chinese to help with raising American Born Chinese children (this was recommended to me, I don't personally know this resource):
<http://touchlifemission.com/>
3. *Boundaries with Teens*: <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/boundaries-with-teens-john-townsend/1102902623?ean=9780310270454>
4. Helps dads to raise their sons:http://www.amazon.com/Raising-Modern-Day-Knight-Fathers-Authentic/dp/1589973097/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1460264637&sr=1-1&keywords=raising+modern+day+knight
5. Chat Pack: A fun deck of cards you can use to spark conversations with your children:
<http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/chat-pack-bret-nicholaus/1019635255?ean=9780975580165>