

# COVENANT KEEPERS

"Dedicated To Strengthening Marriages Through Biblical Principles"

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## Using Reality Based Consequences in Disciplining Your Children

In this study I want you to consider several aspects of discipline and why discipline is so important for you as a parent and for your children as they mature. Then I will explain reality based discipline to you. I believe this form of discipline is one of the most effective methods for guiding your children.

### What is the goal of God's discipline in your life?

The goal of God's spiritual instruction and discipline in your life is to mature and enable you to become a person fully equipped for any and all good works in life. This is the purpose God explained through the Apostle Paul. He wrote, *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The word *instruction* in this passage is the Greek word for discipline. In addition, when Solomon instructed his son concerning the fundamentals of life he said, *"My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother"* (Prov. 1:8). Again, the word *instruction* in this passage is the Hebrew word for discipline. Clearly God's intent is that we would become disciplined in our personal lives. God uses His Word and parents to accomplish this important task.

### Do you see discipline as important in your own life?

This is an important question, because if you are not disciplined in your personal life, how can you teach discipline to your children? You can't – it's impossible! Therefore, the first question to be answered is; do you believe discipline is essential for a productive and enjoyable life? Many believe that discipline is relatively unimportant and prefer to be free spirits.

### How will discipline be helpful in your personal life and your parenting?

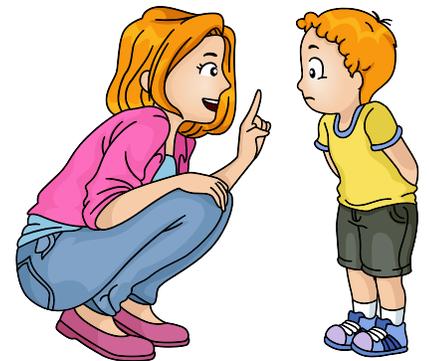
1. Instructive discipline and correction are how a man or woman becomes wise in all aspects of life. Solomon said, *"Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it"* (Prov. 8:33). When you learn from and receive correction from the struggles in your life, you gather valuable wisdom. Hopefully this wisdom will keep you from repeating the same failures over and over again.

2. Instructive discipline is also what keeps you from turning aside onto the path of the wicked. Solomon said, *"Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; keep her, for she is your life. Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on"* (Prov. 4:13-15). If you take a firm hold of God's instructive discipline you will be kept from so much heartache and the consequences of sin in this world.

3. Discipline helps you to be organized in your personal life which then also helps your children to become organized. Remember, you cannot model or be an example of

something you yourself are not doing. You are commanded by God to be *"an example"* (1 Tim. 4:12). If you are scattered and disorganized, your children will likely be equally disorganized and undisciplined.

4. Personal discipline enables you to have follow-through and be consistent in your parenting decisions. Without follow-through and consistency in your example and discipline with your children, you are teaching them that they do not need to live in a disciplined manner. David did not consistently discipline his sons, and several of them ended up rebelling against him (2 Sam. 13; 1 Kings 1:5-6). His children clearly followed his example!



### Explain the Consequences!

Do you mean what you say, and do what you promise? Jesus warned His disciples not to be like the Pharisees who did not live their lives consistent with what they taught. Jesus said it this way: *"Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do"* (Matt. 23:3).

5. Discipline causes you to give incentives and consequences according to how your children

**"She is your companion and your wife by covenant" Mal. 2:14**

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follow-through with their responsibilities.

Rewards and consequences happen in real life. There is always a reward for righteousness and a consequence for the wrongdoing. When you fail to show up for work because you want to do as you please, one day your job will be given to someone else. If you do a good job someone will notice and reward you. And if people fail to reward you, God will. David said, *“Surely there is a reward for the righteous”* (Ps. 58:11). The Psalmist also said, *“Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked”* (Ps. 91:8). Your discipline will reinforce this reality.

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### ***Do you mean what you say, and do what you promise?***

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6. Discipline in your life will lead you to train your children to be self-disciplined. The more you give in to your child’s desire for *“instant gratification”* the more undisciplined your children will become. The more you yield to their incessant requests to “give them this or that,” the more you feed into their desire for instant gratification. Your children must learn to wait and work for things, not instantly get whatever they want. Scripture teaches that the fleshly nature of man loves pleasure and seeks it. However, this kind of thinking will produce a person that will not prosper in life. Solomon taught, *“He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; He who loves wine and oil will not be rich”* (Prov. 21:17). Loving pleasure with its desire for instant gratification is the antithesis of loving God. Paul said in the last days that men would be *“Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God”* (2 Tim. 3:4).

### **How to teach self-discipline**

Do you teach your children to act on feelings instead of using God’s wisdom, God’s commands, and careful consideration before making a

decision? The more a person acts on feelings, as opposed to God’s commandments, the more undisciplined he or she will become. One of the worst decisions King Saul ever made was because he acted on his feelings, which was the final straw in his rejection as King. When he was reproved by Samuel the Prophet, he declared, *“I felt compelled”* (1 Sam. 13:12). Are you feeling oriented or commandment oriented? Do you obey your feelings or God’s Word? These will lead you in opposite directions.

Do you teach your children to consider possible consequences before acting? If you do, you will encourage them to become disciplined people, because they will begin to think and reason for themselves. If you make all their decisions for them you will hinder their maturing in this area. Here is an example: When you are on vacation give your children a certain amount of money, and tell them to buy whatever they want, but when the money is gone there will be no further purchases. Instead of them constantly asking you to buy this or that for them, they will be extra careful about how they spend their money. This teaches thinking and reasoning skills that promote discipline.

If you want your children to be self-disciplined do not make all their decisions for them. Give them options within set boundaries and the reasoning for each option.

Don’t bail them out of the consequences of their decisions if they make poor choices. Why? Because consequences teach them reality discipline and promote greater self-discipline. Do you get bailed out of every trial, problem, or poor decision you make in life? No! Of course not! This is real life. So, don’t be a rescuer that solves every problem for your children. If you do, this will greatly hinder their self-discipline.

One of the great lessons in life is to learn responsibility and accountability for your actions. Self-

disciplined individuals have learned these truths well. The Bible tells us why the wicked rebel. It is because they don’t believe they will have to give account for their actions. David explained, *“Why do the wicked renounce God? He has said in his heart, “You will not require an account”* (Ps. 10:13). Requiring your children to be accountable and responsible teaches them these valuable lessons and keeps them from the error of the wicked. How are you teaching these truths?

Be your child’s teacher and counselor. The more issues they solve on their own the more self-disciplined they will become. Teaching them problem solving principles is a great way to help them to become self-disciplined. Explain how you make decisions. As your child grows older, instead of dictating their response, become their counselor.

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### ***Do you teach your children to consider possible consequences before acting?***

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Weekly chores will also teach your children self-discipline. When you give them age appropriate responsibilities that they must perform every week, whether they feel like it or not, they will gain a sense of self-discipline. This is real life. You get up every day to fulfill your responsibilities whether you feel like it or not. They must learn this valuable truth at a young age.

Another method of self-discipline was given by Dr. James Dobson. He said, *“Do not do for your children what they can do for themselves.”* How simple and yet profound! What did he mean? Here are some examples: learning to tie their own shoes, cleaning their room, as they get older picking out their own clothes each day, making their bed. When they are in junior high school teach them how to do their own laundry. The mother or father should not to be a child’s maid for life. The older

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children get the more personal responsibility they should have, and their chores should be done on their own. When they get a job outside the home teach them to manage their budget, by teaching them to tithe, save, and spend responsibly.

One of the most important biblical examples of learning discipline as a child, and the effects it has in adulthood, is found in the book of Esther. *“Now Esther had not revealed her family and her people, just as Mordecai had charged her, for Esther obeyed the command of Mordecai as when she was brought up by him”* (Esther 2:20). Therefore, the best chance you have of seeing your adult children remain disciplined, is to start early as Mordecai did with Esther.

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**Don't bail them out of the consequences of their decisions if they make poor choices.**

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Discipline always requires a schedule and a plan. God is an orderly God. This fact is revealed as God states His plan and fulfills that plan right on schedule. God has a plan and a right time for everything (Gal. 4:4).

Set a bed time, play time, study time, TV or computer time, and chore time. Yes, you can suspend the schedule for holidays, vacations, or a special reason. But, organization will help your child order his or her own life.

**Examples of reality discipline**

Reality discipline is a form of instruction used throughout the Bible. It directly connects the lack of discipline with the failure to be responsible or to obey God's commandments. What are some examples of reality discipline?

1. Paul taught reality discipline in the early church when professed believers refused to work. Paul told believers not to feed those who refused to work. He said, *“If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat”* (2 Thess. 3:10). This may sound like a

very harsh discipline, but it was only administered when there was a continual refusal to heed warnings and previous discipline. Paul had already warned the people in his first letter and the people continued to refuse to work (1 Thess. 4:11).

This biblical example of ‘no work no food’ also reveals that discipline should always increase in intensity the longer a problem continues. However, harsh discipline does not ever refer to being verbally or physically abusive to your child. It means that there is a time when you need to be stern and firm with you children. This is especially needed with teenagers or adult children who are repeat offenders in any sinful behavior (Prov. 15:10; Mark 3:12). The Corinthians also fell into this category of repeat offenders. Note Paul's verbal sharpness with them (2 Cor. 13:10). The word *sharpness* in this verse means to be abrupt with a person.

2. God also taught the Children of Israel reality discipline when He explained His covenant and the people's responsibility. The entire twenty-sixth chapter of Leviticus is given over to this theme. He explained to the people, *“If you walk in My statutes...then I will give you...”* (Lev. 26:3-4). He also told them, *“If you do not obey Me...I will also do this to you...”* (Lev. 26:14-16). If they obeyed they would be blessed. If they sinned they would suffer His discipline. This is how real life works.

**What is the primary benefit of reality discipline?**

Reality discipline keeps you from having to beg, plead, or threaten your children. Let me give you some practical examples of how this would work.

1. When your pre-school child runs away from you on the playground as you come to pick him up to take him for a special outing for ice cream, and does not listen to you, because he thinks it is funny to run away as fast as he can, ask the attendant to watch

the child and leave. Go get an ice cream for yourself and come back. When your child says, “I want an ice cream!” You respond, “You could have had an ice cream, but you ran away from me, so I had to go get one by myself.” This teaches the child that their decisions have consequences.

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***“Do not do for your children what they can do for themselves.”***

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2. If your pre-school child refuses to eat when dinner is prepared, and everyone else sits down to eat, but the child pushes the food away wanting to play, don't beg, plead, or threaten. Simply say, “We are going to eat; this is all there is.” Everyone should eat and let him sit there. If everyone finishes their dinner and the child continues to refuse to eat, then say, “Ok, dinner is over. There will be nothing until breakfast. You may get down from the table.” Do not give in later and feed him when he begins to cry and plead. He will not starve to death because he missed one meal. When the next meal comes around, he will have a different response. This teaches him that his decisions have consequences.

3. When your elementary school child is not listening to you while at the park – say, “If you don't listen we are going home from our fun time today.” If your child or children do not respond, pick everything up and go home. They will cry and get angry with you. Tell them, “I told you that we were going home if you didn't listen. Next time you will remember that I mean what I say.” It will only take one or two times of leaving a fun outing before they realize their parents mean what they say.

4. When a high school student refuses to use an alarm clock to get up on time to get a ride to school, don't beg, yell, or threaten. Let them sleep and miss their ride. Tell your teenager that he or she must walk to school or ride a bike because they didn't use their

alarm. No begging, pleading, or threatening necessary. He or she must take the natural consequences of missed school work or detention for the unexcused absence.

### Key principles to remember

1. You must be quick thinking and creative with this form of discipline. Simply determine what discipline is directly connected to the disobedience or irresponsibility. You must make quick and creative connections between your child's wrong behaviors (laziness, disrespect) and the correction your child needs. Mete out the discipline that corresponds. This keeps you from having to beg, or threaten, or raise your voice. If you are yelling, it means that your child did not listen the first time.

2. Do not focus on your children's happiness, but on their accountability and responsibility. When they do not get an ice cream or a ride to school, they are going to be very unhappy. They will be very unhappy with you. *But, remind them that they are responsible for their choices.* This is the goal of reality discipline. When your child gets upset with you, you must remain calm and cool. Do not turn around in an hour or two and go buy him an ice cream. Do not change your mind and decide to drive him to school, because you feel sorry for him or you want to appease him. This will short-circuit reality discipline.

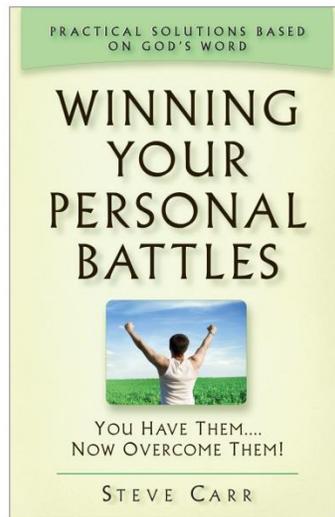
3. When your child does not do his or her chores, either hire a sibling or hire yourself to do the chore. Then take away money from your child's allowance. No yelling or threatening is necessary. This is reality discipline. When your child has been shorted on his allowance, he will say to you, "But, dad that means I won't have enough money to go to the movies with my friends tonight." You say, "Well, next week do your chores and you will have enough money to do the things you want." This is real life. If you do not go to work, you will not get paid. Your children must learn the same lesson. When they do not fulfill

their responsibilities, they lose money, opportunities, or privileges. When they do not listen to instruction, it just becomes harder for them. When they rebel, they lose. Isn't this real life? I encourage you to use reality based discipline as you raise your children to become productive adults.

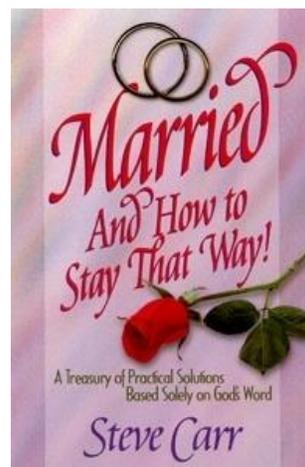
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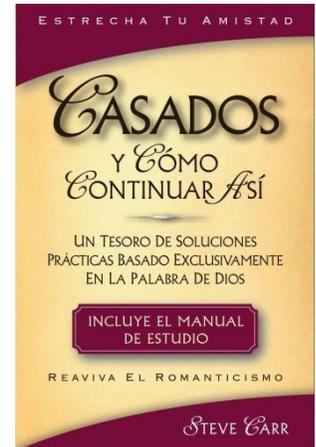
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