

There are hundreds of books and YouTube videos that give advice, instructions and directions on how to do things in your house, on your house and around your house. There's just as many, if not more on how to raise the children inside your house. Years ago, it was Dr. Spock and Dr. Dobson. Now days parents can turn to books, or counseling services, or websites, or blogs.

Our God also gives us, as parents, advice, instructions and directions on raising the children he's given to us. Our Deuteronomy reading gives God's directions to the Children of Israel on what parents should do when their sons or daughters won't listen or obey them.

This may not have been the text you expected on our Christian Education Celebration. I can't imagine a child psychologist or counselor approving of God's methods. We'd be lying if we weren't shocked by what God tells parents to do. And yet, God caused this to be recorded in the Bible. The Lord always has his reasons. As we think about what God says here and how it applies to us as parents and children in 2020, let's go with the theme: **“How Not to Get Stoned,”** as we try to figure out God's advice for parents and God's warning for children.

Two thoughts came to mind as you read or heard today's theme. The phrase *“Get Stoned”* often refers to getting high on pot or another drug. But it can also mean to literally have stones thrown at you. It may not be done in our world today, but it was done by God's people in the OT to children who were rebellious. It was also done by those who were enemies of Jesus' cross in the NT. Stephen was stoned to death and became the first Christian martyr because the Jews hated his witness for the cross of Jesus. That's some background on getting stoned. But want to find out to avoid getting stoned.

It starts with parents. Parents, here's God's advice for you: 1) You are in charge. 2) You are to disciple your children. 3) You are to do something when your child gets out of control.

1) It's clear, the Lord put parents in charge, not children. That used to be obvious, but not anymore. Today, 6-year old Melissa runs the house. Her tantrums bring her mother to tears and her father to give-in to whatever makes Melissa stop. Her parents ask her what SHE wants to wear and eat and when SHE wants to go to bed. What Melissa wants, Melissa gets, because “N-O” is a bad word and destroys her self-esteem and creativity.

Have we completely forgotten the truth of original sin in every child? God tells us that by nature every child, my children and yours ... they're sinners. They came from sinful parents. In his plan, God has placed parents in charge to keep children under control and not allow them to do as they please.

2) Parents have been placed in charge by God and given a huge responsibility. Disciple your kids. Teach them to follow.

Our children need to be taught what to do and what not to do. They don't need to be taught to say: *“Mine,”* or to take things and hit others. They need to be taught to share and keep their hands to themselves. But more than anything else, a child needs to be taught about Jesus. When it comes to Jesus, they don't know anything about him unless we tell them.

Our responsibility is to teach them about God's love and forgiveness. Tell them they are loved by God. Show them his love as we take care of them, provide for their needs and protect them. Show them God's forgiveness as we forgive them when they do make wrong choices. We don't hold their mistakes over their heads and constantly criticize them. We let go of it and move on.

We disciple our children by teaching them right from wrong not only by what we say but also by what we do. Telling our kids it's wrong to misuse God's name, and yet we curse and swear ourselves you get the picture. Kids catch on real fast. As

parents, we are disciple-makers with our words and actions.

3) What's a parent to do with a child who displays a disobedient, defiant and out-of-control pattern of behavior? Here's God's recommendation for his OT people: **If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. They shall say to the elders, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard." Then all the men of his town are to stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid.**

When parents can't handle a child, we don't resort to stoning, but there needs to be consequences for those behavior issues.

Now that kids are back in the classroom, parents, be careful that you don't always stick up for your child as though they can do no wrong. Time and time again, a parent will tell their child's teacher that their child would have never done what the teacher "*claims*" they did. Remember, kids catch on real fast. Make sure you get both sides of the story. At the beginning of each school year one teacher would remind the parents of the children in her classroom: "*I'll believe only half of what your child tells me about you, if you'll believe only half of what they tell you about me.*"

When you find out your child wasn't telling the truth, don't ignore it or make excuses for them; hold them accountable because you love them. Ignoring the sin encourages it to continue and can be dangerous to their connection to their Savior.

Parents, the Lord has put us in charge of our kids with directions to disciple them. God's Word doesn't only give advice for parents, it's also a warning for children. Children, obey your parents, and when you don't there will be consequences.

Almost every kid knows the Fourth Commandment: "**Honor your father and mother.**" Kids, that means

God has placed your parents into your lives and he uses them to bring his blessings of life, love, home, food and protection into your life. Your parents are also the ones who teach you about Jesus.

Parents aren't perfect, but that doesn't give any child the right to disobey them. Obey your parents as you would obey God. They are his representatives in your life.

When we don't obey, we should expect there will be consequences for our behavior. The consequences for the son or daughter in the OT who remained disobedient and defiant was stoning. We don't stone children today, but as children, we should expect our parents will discipline us in some way so we become better followers – grounding, taking away privileges or things we enjoy, increasing chores, maybe even a spanking. Why? Because disobedience brings consequences.

When you're caught speeding, there's a fine to pay because breaking the law has consequences. God operates in the same way. Does that mean that God doesn't forgive me? No! God's forgiveness has nothing to do with the consequences for the sins in our lives.

Jesus Christ has already paid the eternal penalty for our sins. He took care of all of the punishment for all of us. However, in this life, we will face consequences for the mistakes we've made and the wrongs we've done. When sin is confessed and acknowledged God forgives, and as parents we had better make sure our children hear that message loud and clear.

Some might be wondering was God less compassionate and less patient in the OT than he is with us now? No. But his civil laws that governed his OT people were only for his people during OT time. They no longer apply to us. We don't stone disobedient and defiant children. But thank God that Christian parents still disciple the children God has given them. We do it because we love them and we want to see them in heaven one day.