

Proverbs 13:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Analysis

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes. This proverb presents a stark truth about parental discipline that confronts modern sentimentality. The Hebrew word chosek (חוֹק, "spareth") literally means "withholds" or "restrains," indicating deliberate refusal to discipline. The "rod" (shebeto, שְׁבֵטּוֹ) represents parental authority and corrective discipline, not abusive violence.

The shocking assertion that withholding discipline equals hatred (sone'o, שְׁנָאֹן) reveals that true love acts for the child's long-term welfare, not temporary comfort. Conversely, genuine love "chasteneth" (musaro, מוֹסָרָה) from musar, meaning instruction, correction, and training. The word "betimes" (shicharó, שִׁיחָרֹה) means "early" or "diligently"—discipline should be consistent and timely, not neglected until problems become severe.

This wisdom challenges the modern aversion to discipline, exposing the selfishness of permissive parenting that avoids conflict at the child's expense. Biblical discipline combines correction with instruction, motivated by love and aimed at character formation. The principle extends beyond physical discipline to all forms of loving correction that shape godly character and prevent destructive patterns.

Historical Context

Proverbs was compiled primarily during Solomon's reign (970-930 BC) but includes material from other wise men. In ancient Israel, parental discipline was understood as essential to covenant faithfulness—failing to train children in God's ways endangered not just individual families but the entire community's relationship with God.

The cultural context emphasized corporate identity and generational responsibility. Parents who failed to discipline children failed their covenant obligations, potentially bringing God's judgment on the household (see Eli's failure with his sons in 1 Samuel 2:22-25). Discipline was viewed as an expression of love and investment in the child's future, not merely punishment for wrongdoing.

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature (Egyptian, Mesopotamian) also emphasized parental discipline, but Israel's approach was distinctive in grounding discipline in covenant theology and the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7). The New Testament reinforces this principle (Hebrews 12:5-11, Ephesians 6:4), showing that God Himself disciplines those He loves, and earthly fathers should reflect this divine pattern.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How has our culture's rejection of discipline affected children's character development and society?
2. What is the difference between biblical discipline and abusive punishment?

3. How can we practice loving discipline that combines correction with instruction and encouragement?
4. What does this verse reveal about the relationship between short-term comfort and long-term welfare?
5. How does God's discipline of His children inform our understanding of parental responsibility?

Interlinear Text

חֹשֶׁךְ	בְּתוֹךְ	שָׁבֵן	שׁוֹגֵן	בְּנֵי	אֶתְּנָחָבָן	שָׁחַרְתִּי
He that spareth	his rod	hateth	his son	but he that loveth	him betimes	
H2820	H7626	H8130	H1121	H157		H7836
מִנְחָרָה						
him chasteneth						
	H4148					

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 29:17 (Parallel theme): Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

Proverbs 29:15 (Parallel theme): The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame.

Proverbs 19:18 (Parallel theme): Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.

Proverbs 22:15 (Parallel theme): Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

Proverbs 3:12 (Love): For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

Proverbs 8:36 (Love): But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

