

Proverbs 29:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself
bringeth his mother to shame.

Analysis

The rod and reproof give wisdom (שֶׁבֶט וְתוֹכַחַת יִתְּן־חָכְמָה)—physical discipline (shevet, rod/staff) combined with verbal correction (tokachat, rebuke/instruction) imparts wisdom (chokmah). Proverbs repeatedly endorses corporal discipline as loving correction (Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, 23:13-14). The goal isn't abuse but formation—shaping the will toward wisdom.

But a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame (וְנֶעֱרַר מִשְׁלַח מִבֵּישׁ אִמּוֹ)—a youth (naar) sent away/abandoned (meshullach, let loose, undisciplined) brings shame to his mother. Permissive parenting produces shameful outcomes. Hebrews 12:5-11 applies this to God's fatherly discipline of believers—painful but producing 'the peaceable fruit of righteousness.'

Historical Context

Ancient Israelite parenting emphasized active formation through both physical discipline and verbal instruction (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). The family was the primary institution for transmitting covenant faith and wisdom. A child's behavior reflected on the entire family's honor. Eli's failure to restrain his wicked sons brought divine judgment (1 Samuel 2:22-36).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How do you balance the biblical mandate for discipline with contemporary concerns about child safety and dignity?
2. What does it mean to discipline 'faithfully'—correcting out of love rather than anger or neglect?
3. How does God's fatherly discipline in your life produce wisdom, and how do you respond to it?

Interlinear Text

יָשׁ בֶּט	וְ תוֹכַחַת	אֶתְּ	חִכְמָה	וְנַעַר	מִשְׁלָח	יָשׁ
The rod	and reproof	give	wisdom	but a child	left	to shame
H7626	H8433	H5414	H2451	H5288	H7971	H954

אָמַר׃
to himself bringeth his mother
H517

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 17:25 (Parallel theme): A foolish son is a grief to his father, and bitterness to her that bare him.

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

Proverbs 10:1 (Parallel theme): The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

Proverbs 13:24 (Parallel theme): He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

Proverbs 22:6 (Parallel theme): Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 17:21 (Parallel theme): He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow: and the father of a fool hath no joy.

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 10:5 (Parallel theme): He that gathereth in summer is a wise son: but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.

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