

Russell Kelfer

God's Truth About Authority and Discipline

542-B

Series: The Beatitudes



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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

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We return in this lesson to our little side-trip into a study of double-mindedness. It is a study that James calls spiritual adultery. We continue our study of the lies that Satan tells and the contrasting truth in the Word of God. This double-mindedness comes from man's confused computer, the mind, into which is fed some 90-98% of the time by the world's philosophy. This is a standard of impurity where there is no absolutes. It is a standard of compromise that has a self-serving and self-willed spirit. Some 2-10% of the time, depending on how much time we spend in the Word, that computer is programmed for moral purity, absolutes, convictions, selflessness and a yielded will.

The enemy's attack is centered in basically five areas of society. The first is the media which reports as natural the standards of the world. Secular education teaches as reality the standards of the world. Secular counseling reinforces as redeeming the standards of the world. Entertainment tries to demonstrate that the standards of the world are fulfilling. Progressive religion accepts the standards of the world as progressive. All the while, the Word of God denies the standards of the world as false.

Satan's goal is fourfold: 1) He wants to discredit God's worth, 2) His word, 3) His works and 4) His ways. Satan has for generations challenged God subtly, deceptively. As history races seemingly to a head-on collision with the judgment of God, and the church rushes quickly into the arms of its Master. Satan has become more brash, more overt. He is daring to the point of lunacy. He is guilty of overkill. The church of Jesus Christ all across the world is being jolted into the reality of the spiritual conflict. The end result could well be the most amazing revival the world has ever known.

One thing the church must do, and by the church I mean us, is to shake off that double-minded mentality. We need to take some new stands on some old issues. These issues separate the King's men from the King's enemies. The issues thus far have

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been these. Satan has lied about the character of man. He has lied about man's relationship to God. He has lied about what constitutes success. He has lied about morality and told us that morality is relative and marriage is not necessary for a physical relationship. Satan says divorce is an acceptable alternative. He has lied to us about the home. He wants the world to believe that the home is no longer relevant as the center of society, while God says it is a training ground for discipleship. It is God's picture book of God as Father.

In the last lesson, we learned that Satan has lied about the roles of man and woman. He says that they are not clearly defined. His answer is ERA, Equality by Rebellion to Authority. God's answer is EDA, Equality, Diversity, Authority.

SATAN'S LIES ABOUT PARENTS, AUTHORITY AND DISCIPLINE

In this lesson, we come to the sixth area of conflict between the lies of Satan and the truth of God. We will discuss Satan's lies about parents, authority and discipline. There are at least six lies that the world has bought in this regard.

1- Parental authority is a threat to a child's emotional well-being and a violation of his personal rights.

2- Discipline, physical or otherwise, is outdated and unhealthy.

3- Basic concepts of authority must give way to "mutual expression."

4- Loyalty under authority to a nation is no longer a virtue.

5- Rebellion is an acceptable means to accomplish a reasonable purpose.

6- The Bible is not man's infallible authority.

Lies! The spiritual truth these lies adulterate are even more important.

CONCEPT OF PARENTAL AUTHORITY

Satan has convinced much of the world and has affected most of its psychology, permeated its counseling, permeated the educational system and permeated the entertainment industry with this lie. The lie is that adult authority, parents, teachers and church leaders, but in particular parents, are violating children's rights by imposing standards, rules and ethics and making decisions that the children are not equipped to make themselves.

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I saw an article in the paper that in Sweden there was the first case in which a fifteen year old girl sued her parents for divorce and won. She was taken out of the home by the courts because she won the case. She was no longer required to do what her parents wanted her to do because it was displeasing to her.

Do you see the lie? If children of men are not under the authority of their earthly parents, then what does that say? What right then does our heavenly Father have to impose His will on His children? That is the principle. It brings up the whole question of who is in charge and who decides what is best, parents or children. Who decides what movies they see? Who decides what schools they attend? Who decides what friendships they have? Who decides what music they listen to? Who knows what is best? That is the issue.

I was recently asked if I would stop in this lesson long enough to discuss the subject of Halloween because many of you have small children. Who decides what is right? What about Trick or Treating? Many parents find no problem with it. Others are devastated at the thought of their children participating in something so pagan. What is a good stance for Christians to take? Do we lock our children in the house and tell them it is evil? Do we send them out with the others and say nothing? Is there some creative alternative between the two? First, the principles and then the alternatives.

Halloween: The Principles

1- Halloween or All Saints Day is as pagan as any celebration we have. It began in Britain with the belief that one year on October 31st, Seemon, the lord of the dead, called forth many evil spirits. To ward off these creatures, they built big bonfires. All of the customs that have derived from Halloween began with that origin.

2- As Paul wrote concerning meat offered to idols, nothing is evil in and of itself. It is evil in the mind of the one who participates.

3- Paul added that there were actual demons that the pagans were worshipping. We are to be careful not to participate in their ceremonies. The meat wasn't bad, the practice was. This is the principle.

4- To dress up your children as witches and goblins and evil spirits is definitely not wise.

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5- Nothing is neutral character-wise, so we ask ourselves, what principle am I teaching? The principles of Trick or Treating is basically this, it has its roots in, "You give me something, or I will get you." So the character quality that it elevates is not one of the best.

6- But, do you want to take these little ones, so impressionable, and tell them that God hates Halloween? Thus, this implies that God is angry with all of their friends because all of their friends are doing it. This further implies that God's children just don't have any fun like everybody else.

Halloween: The Alternatives

Here is where I believe Christians whose consciences are wounded over their children's participation can be creative but Scriptural. Have fun and take something pagan and turn it into something godly. Here are three alternatives to think about. Prearrange with other Christian families to meet at two or three houses during the evening instead of turning them loose in the neighborhood. Here are some alternative activities.

1- Let your children dress up in costumes as different Bible characters. Go to the other homes and act out a Bible story that they have prepared and see if the others can guess which story it is. Have one of the parents fill in the story and explain the character qualities that can be learned from the story.

2- If you keep your children at home, have them act out a story that expresses a quality that corresponds to the meaning of their own name. Through this experience, they can begin to understand what God has in store for them as a result of the name that He, through you, has given them.

3- Have the children dress like animals. They do that a lot anyway. Have someone read some character sketches that correspond with that animal's behavior. This is something that public school teachers can do also. They can teach character without violating what amounts to their "freedom from religion."

Then afterwards, you can reward them with treats, because God teaches about rewards, and He delights to give good things to His children. It is all about personal conscience and these are some possibilities. Remember that you are in charge, not the children.

Satan has distorted that. His goal is to discredit the authority

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of God. The Scripture is clear, and the verses that will be discussed in this lesson ought to be memorized by your children by the time they are able to speak. It ought to be like frontlets between their eyes. Maybe what we need is a Year of the Parent. Here are some verses, after checking, take this out.

Young man, obey your father and your mother.

Tie their instructions around your finger so that you won't forget. Take to heart all of their advice.

Every day and all night long their counsel will save you from harm; when you wake up in the morning, let their instruction guide you into a new day.

For their advice is a beam of light directed into the dark corners of your mind to warn you of danger and to give you a good life. (Proverbs 6:20-23 TLB)

Have your children memorized that yet? They ought to. Let's look at some other verses:

Only a fool despises his father's advice; a wise son considers every suggestion. (Proverbs 15:5 TLB)

A rebellious son is a grief to his father and a bitter blow to his mother. (Proverbs 17:25 TLB)

A man who mocks his father and despises his mother shall have his eye plucked out by ravens and eaten by vultures. (Proverbs 30:17 TLB)

Anyone who strikes his father or mother shall surely be put to death. (Exodus 21:15 TLB)

Children obey your parents in the Lord as His representative for this is just and right.

Honor (esteem and value as precious) your father and your mother - this is the first commandment with a promise

That all may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth. (Ephesians 6:1-3 Amplified Bible)

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord. (Colossians 3:20 NKJV)

Do your children know those verses? Are they just obeying you, because you tell them to obey you? Do they grasp that they are supposed to obey you, because God gave them special commandments and special blessings for doing it?

In the last lesson, I mentioned the pendulum of Satanic extremes concerning women's rights. We can see that the concept of children's rights is the same but more so. Barklay says that

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in pre-Christian civilizations and in Paul's day, life was at best, perilous for the child. There was in Rome what was known as the father's power. A Roman father had absolute power over his children. He could sell them as slaves. He could make them work in the fields in chains. If he chose, he could even inflict the death penalty on his own children. A Roman son never came of age. Even as a grown man, he might be the chief magistrate of the city, yet he was under his father's power.

There was also the custom of child exposure. When a child was born, it was placed before his father's feet. If the father stooped and lifted the child, it meant that he acknowledged it and wanted to keep it. If he turned and walked away, it meant that he refused to acknowledge the child and either the child was given away or thrown into the garbage heap.

One illustration of this is a letter dated 1 B.C. from a man named Helerion to his wife Elise. It is a letter that reflects affection on the one hand, but is very callous to life where children were concerned. Here is the letter:

Helerion to Elise, my wife,

Hardest greetings. Know that we are still even now in Alexandria. Do not worry if I must remain in Alexandria when the others return. I beg and beseech you to take care of the little child. As soon as I receive wages I will send them to you. If, good luck to you, you have a child and it is a boy, let it live. If it is a girl, throw it out.

You told Aphrodisia to tell me, "Do not forget me." How could I forget you? I beg you not to worry.

Isn't that tender? If it is a boy, keep it. If it is a girl, throw it into the garbage. The marriage bond had collapsed, and it was in a world like that in which children were viewed as a misfortune. Unwanted children were left to be discarded, picked up by anybody who desired, taken as slaves or raised as prostitutes. Children were "things", not people. The sickly or deformed child had a fate that was even worse. Sinica writes, "We slaughter a fierce ox. We strangle a mad dog. We plunge the knife into sickly cattle, lest they taint the herd. Children who are born weakly or deformed we drown."

It was against this kind of background that Jesus came. He healed those who were blind from birth. He cleansed the lepers.

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He drew the little children into His arms and said,

Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them;
for of such is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 19:14 NKJV)

It was Jesus who penetrated man's callous and indifferent attitude towards children when He said,

but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matthew 18:6 NASB)

It was because of Jesus that Paul wrote,

...fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. (Ephesians 6:4 NKJV)

Jesus liberated children, too. They were free, but under authority.

This is a subject that has been covered in two of our last three lessons, the spiritual significance of the family. The father's role is to portray physically the role of God, the spiritual father. The child's role is to portray the role of the child of God, the church. The lesson "God's Truth about the Home" (lesson number 541b), listed 22 things a good father communicates about the character of God, the Father. We must return to communicating the basic principles of parental authority. I want to encourage you to be sure that your children understand at least 4 principles.

1- When they respond to their parents, they are in essence responding to God through His chosen representative.

2- Their response to earthly parents tells their unsaved friends a story about man's relationship to God.

3- They are responding to the office, not the character or consistency of the one holding that office. Daddy may lose his temper, he may be rude, crude or uncouth. He may be hauled off to jail by the game warden, but you still obey him because of the office he holds, the position he holds.

4- God did not make a mistake. These parents were ordained of God for their life message to be developed. Therefore, it will work together for good.

School teachers who have so many children from broken homes and bad situations, have a real responsibility. They can

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communicate to them that God is entrusting them to learn deep truths early and to depend on Him totally. He has a message for them that He makes no mistakes.

CONCEPT OF DISCIPLINE

This aspect builds on the first. It is a principle that is in even greater danger in our society. It is the concept of discipline. We heard in a past lesson of a child that was taken from the family because he was disciplined. We know that in the school systems today, it is increasingly difficult to discipline children. If it is wrong for parents, for schools, and for churches to tell their children what to do, then surely Satan tries to give society the thought that it is wrong to punish them for not doing it.

The lie goes deeper than that. Here is the principle. It says that if discipline is unfair in the home, then discipline is unfair in the courts. If discipline is unfair in the courts, then discipline is unfair in the church. If all of this is true, then maybe God doesn't have the right to punish His children. Maybe there is no judgment. Maybe there is no hell. Maybe there is no chastisement of the saints. The lie is that if love means no discipline and if God is love, He will not discipline or judge us. That is the problem.

There is no place where the Scripture speaks more clearly. What is discipline? Discipline is the dynamic that produces disciples. I want to list for you from the Scriptures, why we must discipline our children and how we must discipline our children. Discipline can be self-imposed or God-imposed. God imposes discipline in three ways: 1) through circumstances 2) through conviction and 3) through authority. There is positive and negative discipline. Positive discipline is training to direct. Negative discipline is chastisement to correct. If we look at God's principles of disciplining His children and His commandments to us to discipline ours, together they merge into crystal clear principles.

Why must we discipline our children?

1- To demonstrate love. I wish I had memorized this passage 20 years ago. You may say, "Well, psychologists don't all agree on discipline." That's true. Who do you listen to? Dr. Spock, Dr. Brothers or Ann Landers. Why not listen to God? He is the one authority who has never changed His mind. Proverbs 13 in the Living Bible says this:

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If you refuse to discipline your son, it proves you don't love him, for if you love him, you will be prompt to punish him.
(Proverbs 13:24 TLB)

2- Discipline early to save him from grief. Proverbs 19 says:

Discipline your son in his early years while there is hope. If you don't, you will ruin his life.
(Proverbs 19:18 TLB)

There are a lot of us who would have liked to have memorized these verses a lot earlier in our lives. But, some of you here are just beginning with families. You can begin today to recognize the principle. God speaks very clearly. Very early when children begin to run the household with tears, tantrums, if they can control you that is the time discipline must begin. Discipline your son in his early years while there is hope. If you don't, you will ruin his life. Psalm 119 also supports this principle,

I used to wander off until You punished me, now I closely follow all You have to say.
(Psalm 119:67 TLB)

3- To chase evil from the heart. Proverbs says,

Proverbs 20 says,

Punishment that hurts chases evil from the heart.
(Proverbs 20:30 TLB)

A youngsters heart is filled with rebellion, but punishment will drive it out of him.
(Proverbs 22:15 TLB)

What if you have a child who just dares you to punish him? The Scripture has something to say about that in Isaiah 5,

...and dare the Lord to punish them. "Hurry up and punish us O Lord," they say. "We want to see what you can do."
(Isaiah 5:19 TLB)

Therefore, God will deal with them.

4- To direct them to God. You tell them about a God of discipline, a God of love, a God of order, a God of justice so that they will understand the principle of discipline.

Don't fail to correct your children; discipline won't hurt them! They won't die if you use a stick on them.

Punishment will keep them out of hell.
(Proverbs 23:13,14 TLB)

5- We punish to save ourselves from grief.

Scolding and spanking a child helps him to learn. Left to himself, he brings shame to his mother.
(Proverbs 29:15 TLB)

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Discipline your son and he will give you happiness and peace of mind. (Proverbs 29:17 TLB)

A sensible son gladdens his father. A rebellious son saddens his mother. (Proverbs 15:20 TLB)

6- Discipline to set an example for others.

The wise man learns by listening; the simpleton only by seeing scorners punished. (Proverbs 21:11 TLB)

Therefore, the Lord God says, I, even I, am against you and will punish you publicly while all the nations watch. (Ezekiel 5:8 TLB)

Punish a mocker and others will learn from his example. (Proverbs 19:25a TLB)

How Does God Discipline?

Your young ones learn by seeing the older ones punished. We don't need to hide that from them.

If there are reasons God punishes, how does He do it? These are the principles we find in Scripture.

1- He punishes after first giving a warning.

This is my third warning, I have already warned you, warn those who have been sinning. Now I warn you again. This time I come ready to punish you.

(II Corinthians 13:1,2 paraphrased)

Why did God send the prophets? He sent them to warn of impending punishment so that when the punishment came, they would understand why it was coming.

2- He punishes always in love.

The Lord replies: Ephraim is still my son, my darling child. I had to punish him, but I still love him...

(Jeremiah 31:20 TLB)

3- He punishes always in keeping with His Word. The best illustration that keeps coming to my mind is the story of Moses. What a beautiful, obedient servant he was. However, on one occasion, he violently disobeyed the will of God. He was supposed to speak to the rock to bring forth water, but instead he struck it as he had done before. Afterwards, God said to Moses, "Because of that incident, you cannot go into the land." God continued to use Moses, and he was probably the most beautifully used man in the history of the Word. When the time came to go into the land, Moses was an old man with all kinds of stars in his crown.

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Moses eased up to God and said, "Do you remember on the top of that mountain? Lord, I have been a good boy. I am almost 90 and I have been a good boy all this time except that one incident. How about changing Your mind?" God said, "You have been a good boy, Moses, but My Word is My Word."

I believe that it is at this point as a parent that I have failed more than any other single thing. Some of you ought to shake your heads in agreement. The key is, don't threaten what you cannot do. Once you have threatened, do it. My son said to me a number of years ago something I won't forget, "Dad, I just wish that whatever you say you are going to do, you would do it. Then I will know where I stand." How does that make you feel? But that is the truth.

4- He punishes by varying the method to meet the need. God doesn't always punish in the same way. Sometimes He withholds blessings or rewards. He told the children of Israel, "You are not going to get to go into the land because of your rebellion and disbelief. You will just wander around in the wilderness and suffer. That is your punishment." Sometimes by rewarding the good in others, He punishes those who don't get in on it. Sometimes just the sound of His voice is punishment enough. Sometimes a parent who speaks always in love, speaks with great authority.

The voice of the Lord shall punish the Assyrians.

(Isaiah 30:31 TLB)

The Psalmists said that the Lord speaks and the mountains quake. If you are not always screaming at your children in anger, when you do speak with authority, they will listen. Sometimes the sound of your voice is enough.

5- He punishes through chastisement or physical discipline.

Sometimes mere words are not enough-discipline is needed.

For the words may not be heeded. (Proverbs 29:19 TLB)

6- He punishes by letting the people reap what they have sown.

Your own wickedness will punish you. (Jeremiah 2:19a TLB)

That is hard to do as a parent. But sometimes if we can just step back and let them bear the fruit of what they are doing, if we know it is something they can live through without serious scars, that is the deepest kind of punishment we can give them.

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7- God never punishes in anger.

No, Lord! Don't punish me in the heat of your anger.

(Psalms 6:1 TLB)

Oh Lord, don't punish me while You are angry!

(Psalms 38:1 TLB)

God answers in Hosea,

No, I will not punish you as much as my fierce anger tells Me to.

(Hosea 11:9 TLB)

How often we, as parents, will not simply wait until the heat cools down, and we can look with love into their eyes and honestly discipline them. We discipline in anger and hostility, and then what we get back is anger and hostility.

8- God disciplines proportionate to the sins.

...I will punish them in proportion to their treatment of My people.

(Jeremiah 25:14 TLB)

In other words, don't empty the whole bag of discipline over the first offense. They must see the gravity of greater disobedience.

9- He punishes proportionate to their understanding.

But anyone who is not aware that he is doing wrong will be punished lightly. Much is required to whom much is given, for their responsibility is greater.

(Luke 12:48 TLB)

If you have told the child a second time, or if they are older, or if they have deeper understanding, their punishment ought to be progressively greater. That is God's principle.

10- He punishes to correct, not to destroy; to break their will, but not their spirit.

...I will destroy the nations to which I have exiled you, but I will not destroy you. I will punish you, but only enough to correct you.

(Jeremiah 46:28 TLB)

Be sensitive to what it takes to correct the spirit without breaking it.

11- He punishes with forgiveness upon repentance. How many times does our anger and hostility not allow us to forgive our children when they really repent?

For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You.

(Psalms 86:5 NKJV)

They must learn the difference between forgiveness and reaping. God forgave Moses, but he still didn't get to go into the land.

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12- He punishes but gives encouragement afterwards.

After you have punished me, give me back my joy again.
(Psalms 51:8 TLB)

After you have suffered a little while, our God, who is full of kindness through Christ, will give you His eternal glory. He personally will come and pick you up, and set you firmly in place, and make you stronger than ever. (I Peter 5:10 TLB)

13- Sometimes allow your children to go through undeserved punishment to test their spirit.

Praise the Lord if you are punished for doing right!
(I Peter 2:19 TLB)

We make mistakes as parents, and God uses those mistakes to teach our children deeper truths than they could learn even when they are corrected rightly. So, as always, God's truth is clear. It is in direct opposition to the lies of Satan. God gave children parents to direct them and to protect them, but also to correct them.

God gave children two direct commandments. The first was
Children, honor your parents. (Ephesians 6:1 paraphrased)

That means to respect them and set them up on high in your heart. The second was,

Obey your parents, and do what they say,
(Ephesians 6:1b paraphrased)

God is speaking through them to you.

God gave parents direct instructions. He said,

Discipline your children while there is time. If you don't you will ruin their lives. (Proverbs 19:18 paraphrased)

It is a big part of a parent's responsibility. Those of you with young children must start now, if you have not already started. You must be consistent in your discipline, and it must be bathed in love. Unless Christian parents and Christian teachers begin anew to faithfully instill in our children the beauty of authority, the necessity of obedience, and the blessing that comes with punishment, another generation will grow up with no respect for the authority of God and no concept of the discipline of God. Therefore, they will not fully grasp the love of God.

Some of you are just embarking on the seas of training up a child in the way he should go. Contrary to the lies of the enemy,

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I just want to remind you that to have love in your heart and a switch in your hands is not incompatible, but, rather, is the will of God.

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(01.17.14)