

### Lesson 12: Positive Parenting Principles

We don't live in a "family friendly" world. We live in a culture where careers, cars, and cash are more important than children. The principles in this lesson should be used by parents, grandparents, teachers, or anyone who wants to have a positive impact on kids. These **positive parenting principles** are based on **five** things all children need.

#### Children need acceptance

This is the absolute foundation for raising good children. The most important thing kids need to know is, no matter what they might do or what mistakes they might make, they are still loved and accepted. When children feel accepted for who they are, not what they do, they feel secure and valued. One of the most misunderstood verses in *Proverbs* has to do with accepting our kids for who they are. It is [Proverbs 22:6](#). Write it below!

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Unfortunately, many fine Christian parents misunderstand this verse to mean, "Have family devotions, take your children to Sunday school and worship, and when they grow up, they will not permanently depart from the faith." But that's **not** what that verse means.

The key to understanding this verse is the word translated *way* (*dārak*, day-rak), which has the same Hebrew root translated *bent* in [Psalm 7:12b](#). Write it below:

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Today, our precision, fiberglass compound bows all shoot the same if they have the same pounds of pull. However, in biblical times bows were handmade of wood, and each had a different "bend" or pull. To be accurate, an archer had to know his bow and be very familiar with its bend, or pull.

So, [Proverbs 22:6](#) could be translated "Train a child according to his own temperament or personality ("bend"), and when he is old he will not turn from it." This means if a son is not good at math, you shouldn't force him to be a CPA. If a daughter is not good at sports, don't force her to play. If they are good at music, get them the instrument they want to play and pay for some lessons (hopefully it won't be drums). Many parents try to live out their dreams through their children, and this leads to disaster. Instead, discover, accept, and encourage the "bend" God gave your children.

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Stop trying to make your children like you. One of you is enough! God never intended your kids to be little replicas of you. The only thing worse than peer pressure is parent pressure. God creates every child to be unique. How does [Psalm 139:13](#) describe how God creates a life?

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The word *reins* refers to personality, talents, intellect, and gifts. Don't mess up God's creation by trying to alter your kid; accept him or her as a unique gift from God.

As parents, grandparents, teachers, etc., we should grab every opportunity to let kids know we accept them for who they are—not what they do. Also, kids need to know our acceptance of them never changes. We should be like God, who makes what declaration of His acceptance of us in [Jeremiah 31:3b](#)?

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Not only do **kids need acceptance**, but also...

### Children need appreciation

Acceptance says, "Who I am matters." Appreciation says, "What I do matters." If you want to raise good kids, don't nag; brag! Try to catch them doing something good. According to [Proverbs 16:21b](#), how will this help in parenting?

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This means the best way to teach is to be positive—to brag, not nag. This is something I personally have had to work to change. I am a strong "type A" personality, so I want things done right the first time. Therefore, I have always been quick to criticize and slow to praise, but I'm working on it!

It's easy to find fault in kids because no kid is even close to perfect. So, look for improvement, not perfection. Look for improvement in their grades. If all "C's" is an improvement, praise them. Some kids deserve more praise for all "C's" than others do for all "A's." Every kid needs a cheerleader—someone who is in his or her corner. If you as a parent don't show appreciation for your kid, someone else will, and it may be someone who will lead him or her away from the ways of God.

Kids need **acceptance, appreciation, and ...**

### Children need attention

Kids can't get too much attention. When a child doesn't get attention, rebellion will spring up in various forms. One counselor reports that most misbehavior on the playground takes place within ten yards of a teacher. Why would kids misbehave where they are most likely to be seen? Because they are saying, "Hey, I'm here. I want attention, and I'll do anything to get it." Rebellion and misbehavior says, "Please give me some attention." If kids can't get our attention by doing something good, they will get it by doing something bad. What command does [Ephesians 6:4a](#) give us?

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The word translated *fathers* (*patēr*, pat-air) could also be translated "parents." Few things *provoke* a kid like not getting attention because they feel rejected, and **the worst form of rejection is being ignored**. Kids desperately need attention and will do anything to get it. My recliner has a pillow that flips back. When my first grandchild, Tyler, was in pre-school, he loved to sneak behind my recliner, and when I leaned forward, he would pester me by flipping back the pillow so when I sat back, my head would flop against the frame of my chair. Then, Tyler would take off running and say, "Come get me, Poppa, come get me!" In other words, "Show me some attention, Poppa."

Not only do kids need **acceptance, appreciation, and attention**, but...

### Children need authority

Kids don't need another pal; they need a parent who is an authority figure in their lives. They need someone who sets boundaries or rules. However, rules without discipline are nothing more than suggestions. Kids don't need suggestions; they need boundaries, which, when crossed, result in discipline. How does [Proverbs 29:17](#) describe the results of discipline?

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Everyone who deals with kids should know the difference between discipline and punishment. Discipline promotes change, while punishment inflicts pain. Discipline focuses on future behavior, while punishment focuses on past behavior. Discipline is done in love, while punishment is usually done out of frustration or anger.

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God has given parents the responsibility and authority to discipline children. However, many parents discipline the wrong way because they misunderstand what famous verse found in [Proverbs 13:24](#)?

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The word *rod* refers to the shepherd's rod, which was used almost exclusively for guiding sheep, not beating them. The shepherds would gently but firmly steer the sheep by simply holding the *rod* to block them from going in the wrong direction. That's why we find so much comfort in the last phrase of [Psalm 23:4](#). What is it?

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David knew that when he died, God's loving *rod* would guide him safely to heaven. The Bible says we are to *Train up a child in the way he should go*; not *beat him in the way he should go* ([Prov. 22:6a](#), emphasis mine).

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Many parents ask, "Should I spank my child?" There is much disagreement over spanking, but most experts agree spanking only works with younger children. This is because children at these ages may not understand the consequences of disobedience, and therefore, a spanking may be effective if done sparingly and with consistency, but without anger. However, most experts agree older children and teenagers should never be spanked! They are old enough to understand consequences, so discipline, such as timeouts and loss of privileges, are far more effective and involve no violence. Spankings are very dangerous because they are often given by angry parents, and what does God tell us in [Proverbs 27:4a](#)?

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I used to try to keep my car spotless. I would wash it and then dry it with a chamois, which is lamb's skin and is fairly expensive. Sometimes my son Jeremy would help me wash my car, and I had told him how expensive my chamois was. One afternoon after I had just gotten a new chamois, I came home tired and very frustrated from a hard day. As I drove into the garage I saw my new chamois, covered with mud and grease, hanging on the wall. I went in and asked Jeremy, who was probably in the fifth grade at the time, if he knew what had happened to my new chamois. He told me he rode his bike through some mud coming home from school, so he used the chamois to clean off his bike.

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I said, "Jeremy, don't you remember that I told you how expensive that chamois was? And now it is ruined!" Then, to my shame, I spanked him. Later that night, Virginia explained Jeremy had seen me wiping off my car with the chamois, and he was just trying to be like his dad. My heart sank! I never spanked one of my children again.

Like that incident, spankings are often used by parents who don't want to take the time to *train* children properly. Whenever we use discipline, we should never do so when we are angry, for at least two reasons. First, when we discipline in anger, we are more concerned with relieving the frustration than disciplining the child. Second, when we are frustrated, it feels good to jump on the kids, get in their faces, and say reckless things that can hurt for a lifetime. Therefore, we need to remember what truth found in [Proverbs 29:8b](#)?

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Anger let loose is called *wrath*. The best way to avoid venting our anger, which is *wrath*, is to keep our words to a minimum. Discipline should always be done when we are cool, calm, and collected. The best way to know if you are punishing in anger or disciplining in love is to ask, "Is my child afraid of me?" We need to ask this question because of what fact found in [1John 4:18a-b](#)?

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Kids need **acceptance, appreciation, attention, authority**, and finally...

### Children need apologies

We need to tell our kids we make mistakes; we aren't perfect parents and we know it. I can't tell you how many times I have had to go sit on one of my kids' beds before they went to sleep and apologize for being grumpy, forgetful of important events, unkind, or just wrong about something. Nothing can heal a relationship like an apology and nothing prevents us from apologizing like pride. Therefore, we need to remember what truth found in [Proverbs 11:2](#)?

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However, don't assume apologizing for something gives you the right to do it again. Repeating the offense indicates you didn't mean the apology.

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To use **positive parenting principles**, we must understand kids **need acceptance, appreciation, attention, authority, and apologies**. Which of these areas needs the most improvement in your life?

—Journey Series - Book Studies