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**Methods of Discipline**  
*Answer Key*

- I. The method of discipline is determined by the **goal** of discipline.
- A. The Biblical goal of discipline is to bring about change in the **heart**.
  - B. We must deal with the **source** of behavior, not just with behavior itself.
    - 1. Fighting over the remote control. What is the condition of the heart?
    - 2. Tripping someone. What is the condition of the heart?
    - 3. Spilling milk. What is the condition of the heart?
  - C. The Scriptures tell us plainly that the heart is the source of **behavior**.  
Matthew 12:33-37, Mark 7:14-23, Luke 6:43-45.
  - D. The **goal** is not to have well-behaved children, although that should be the result.
  - E. The goal is to have children who are **sensitive** to their sin and their need for a Savior.
- II. **Worldly** discipline methods do not deal with the heart.
- A. Hitting & yelling. Parents use the threat of punishment to control their children.
    - 1. Trains the child to your anger level rather than exposing his/her heart.
    - 2. Teaches the child that he/she has offended you rather than God.
  - B. Bribery. "If you don't misbehave in the store I will buy you a candy bar."
    - 1. Appeals to and encourages their sin (selfishness) rather than confronting it.
    - 2. Trains children to focus on "what's in it for them" rather than what pleases God.
    - 3. Note that we are talking about moral behavior here, not developing skills. There is a place for rewarding accomplishment (learning to swim, etc.)
  - C. Behavior modification. (B.F. Skinner promoted this idea.) People are like animals. Reward good behavior and they will keep doing it. Punish bad behavior and they will stop doing it.
    - 1. This approach trains the person to do whatever it takes to get the reward or avoid the punishment.
    - 2. It doesn't deal with the motivation of the heart. Why should children obey?
    - 3. Would this approach have worked with Daniel? The apostle Paul? Why not?
  - D. Emotional appeals. "I'm so disappointed in you." "It makes me so sad when you act that way." "You are an embarrassment to our family." "I don't love you."
    - 1. Results in a desire to please parents rather than please God.
    - 2. This manipulation can also result in a distancing from parents.
  - E. Grounding. "You are grounded to your room for a month."
    - 1. Grounding doesn't deal with the heart/motivation for the sin.
    - 2. Grounding may be worth it. They may even enjoy it.

III. Biblical methods deal with the heart.

A. Communication. Deuteronomy 6:6-9.

1. **Constant** communication.
2. You initiate it. Don't wait for them to come to you. You go to them.
3. Ask questions. Then listen for the answers. Ask them, "why?"
  - a. Why are you angry?
  - b. What happened to upset you?
  - c. What were you thinking when you said that?
  - d. What do you think about your brother/sister?
  - e. What do you think about what's going on in Iraq? Why?
  - f. Who did you want to be president? Why?
  - g. What do they think about Christmas? What do their friends and teachers think?
  - h. Homosexuality. Are people born that way?
4. After listening, teach them. Explain the "whys" to them.
5. Listen to them. Work to understand what they are thinking and why they are thinking it. Listen. Listen. Listen. Don't just hear. Understand them.

B. The **rod**. Proverbs 22:15, 13:24, 23:13-14, 29:15. Hebrews 12:4-11.

1. We commonly use the term "spanking."
2. God has connected the pain of the rod with driving foolishness out of the heart.
3. We need to make sure that we connect the spanking with the child's behavior and not with our anger level.
4. "The rod of correction imparts wisdom." Proverbs 29:15
  - a. The rod is for correction.
  - b. It imparts wisdom.
5. The use of the rod is also an act of faith. We may not understand the precise way in which it works but we use it because God says it will accomplish its purpose.

C. Appeal to **conscience**. Romans 2:12-16.

1. God has given them the ability to understand right and wrong.
2. Appealing to the conscience is done as follows:
  - a. Through the use of questions and discussion help the child to understand what is right and what is wrong.
  - b. Then ask them whether they will choose to do what is right and please God or what is wrong and rebel against Him.
  - c. Will they do what is right or what is wrong?

D. **Consequences** (sowing & reaping). Galatians 6:7-10.

1. All of our actions have consequences that follow from them.
2. When we do what is right, in general things go well for us.
3. When we sin, we should expect problems in our lives.
4. Some consequences are natural. Others are brought by government and parents.

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*Student Worksheet*

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