

# Covenant Discipline in the Classroom Veritas Academy, August 2023

## I. Imitate the Master of Discipline: God the Father

- *You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you. Deut 8:5*
- *My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor detest His correction; For whom the Lord loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights. Prov 3:11-12*
- *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. Eph 5:1*

Must ask, "How does God discipline/teach/train His children?"

## II. The Model of the Heavenly Father: Teach – Train – Bless/Curse

- A. Teach: God teaches first. He presents the law/commands/expectations before He disciplines.

His commands are:

1. Clear: Very straightforward, not confusing
2. Preparatory: Given before the temptation was encountered. God did not (does not) wait until after sins were committed before He gave His commands (e.g. the Garden).
3. Both Positive and Negative --Not always Positive: God often says "NO"
4. Heart Oriented: God's ultimate concern is not so much what to do or what not to do, but what's in the heart.

*1 Samuel 16:7* But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."

*Proverbs 4:23* Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

The teacher must teach-teach-teach the rules, expectations, procedures and routines. Spend an entire lesson-time each morning of the first week or two teaching rules/routines/expectations.

- B. Train:

1. God warns of blessings and curses: "If you obey...blessings, If you disobey...curses."

Must communicate what is right and wrong, what is pleasing and displeasing in the classroom. Be very clear and specific.

2. God prohibits reinterpretation of His commands. He never allows us to twist/distort/dilute His commands. He says what He means and means what He says.

Say what YOU mean and mean what YOU say. Be firm and consistent.

3. God uses hypothetical situations to prepare His children for obedience. "If this happens...this is how you must respond"

*Proverbs 1:10-11* My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent. If they say, "Come with us, Let us lie in wait to shed blood; Let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause;

see also Deut. 13

Go over hypothetical situations before the students encounter the real thing (assembly, tests, how to respond to discipline, adult walks in room, etc.)

C. Bless and Curse:

1. Bless for obedience: Encourage, praise, tell them "well done" (see Matt. 3:17) (as opposed to giving trinkets, rewards, stickers, etc.)
2. Curse for Disobedience: Verbal admonishment, loss of privilege, office visit.

### III. Discipline In Loco Parentis.

- A. Parents are ultimately responsible for their child's behavior at school. At school you act as an agent of the parent in discipline as well as academics.
- B. Communicate, communicate, communicate, communicate with the parents about ALL disciplinary issues.
- C. The discipline process has two end goals:
  1. Shepherding the Heart –Confession, Repentance before God
  2. Inform the parent so they may fulfill their parental duties and administer corrective punishment, if needed. Do not administer corrective punishment. Leave this to the parent.

### IV. Obstacles to Faithful Discipline in the classroom:

- A. Laziness and Neglect: Especially in the teaching and training process. Consistent biblical discipline is time consuming and hard work.
- B. Culpable Blindness: Even if you do not see it, you are still responsible for it.  
Remember: You are always disciplining your students –either properly or poorly, but always.

### V. Basic Guidelines for Discipline

A. A lack of discipline is an act of hatred.

*Proverbs 13:24 He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.*

B. We must hate sin before we can properly discipline.

*Psalm 97:10 You who love the Lord, hate evil! He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked.*

*Psalm 5:4-8 For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, Nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood. The Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy. In fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of my enemies; Make Your way straight before my face.*

**-You should never feel guilty or apologetic for confronting sin.**

C. Shepherd the Heart (as opposed to merely managing outward behavior).

*Proverbs 4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.*

*Luke 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

-Outward behavior is always an expression of the overflow of the heart.

-The fundamental issue in discipline is what is going on in the heart, not the outward behavior.

-If you produce change in behavior without a change in heart, you produce a hypocrite and a Pharisee.

Keys to Shepherding Hearts:

1. Learn to work from the behavior you see outwardly back to what is going on in the heart inwardly. Expose the struggle of the heart and help the student see that the thirst of their heart can be satisfied only in knowing and obeying God.
2. Keep a God-ward Orientation –apply the Scriptures and help the student see his behavior and heart before God.
3. Exercise your God-given and parent-delegated authority in the classroom.
4. Be a model of one who finds joy and hope only in Him.
5. Communicate to your students –Authority must not be void of communication – two-way communication –Teacher speaks and teacher listens to know his students.

D. Maintain a healthy distinction between God's Rules and House Rules

God's Rule is absolute    House rules are flexible/adaptable

God's Rule –Obey Authority    House Rule –Say "yes sir" or "no ma'am"

E. Public offenses should have public consequences

*Proverbs 21:11 When the **scoffer** is punished, the **simple** is made wise; But when the **wise** is instructed, he receives knowledge.*

Three types of students are observing how you handle discipline situations:

1. The Scoffer –does not take authority seriously, does not learn from discipline
2. The Simple –lacks wisdom and understanding, but is teachable
3. The Wise –respects authority, fears God, learns from discipline, seeks wisdom and finds it.

F. The Circle of Confession Must Equal the Circle of Transgression.

If the child sins before the entire class, he must confess before the entire class.

G. Expect Proper Obedience. Obedience must be:

1. Right Away (immediate) (*delayed obedience = disobedience*)
2. All the Way (complete)    (*incomplete obedience = disobedience*)
3. In the Right Way (with right attitude) (*begrudging obedience = disobedience*)

H. Seek answers to three questions from a disobedient student (if setting/situation allows).

1. What did you do? Have the student acknowledge what they have done.
2. What is the rule/expectation? Have student repeat the standard/rule/expectation.
3. What does God call it? Have the student recognize that his action is sin in God's eyes.

I. Follow the Three-Checks-On-The-Chart System.

1<sup>st</sup> Offense in a day –ask three questions, give 1<sup>st</sup> check.

2<sup>nd</sup> Offense -ask three questions, give private admonishment if needed, give 2<sup>nd</sup> check.

3<sup>rd</sup> Offense –ask three questions, send to office

Generally, (especially for 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and above) do not take away privileges, do time-outs, keep students in from recess, or the like to punish students for misbehavior. Follow the three-checks system. Leave the corrective punishment to the parents.

Students who consistently get two checks for same offenses day after day should be sent to office after only two checks.

Grammar students in Art, Music, or P.E. –Send to office after two checks during a class period.

Upper school students in rotating classes –Send to office after two checks during a class period.

**Application of Three-Checks to different ages/grades:**

- Make a distinction between obedience/rebellion/defiance issues and self-control/maturity issues (especially for younger students -PK-2).
- For self-control/maturity issues, be patient and focus on training using natural consequences.
- For defiance/obedience issues apply the three-checks system.
- For younger children model the three-checks system as a training tool without actually sending the student to the office at the beginning of the year. Generally (unless there is overt defiance) do not send the student to the office for three checks –apply and explain but do not send to office (only communicate to parents).

Do this for: First nine weeks for PK & K, four-six weeks for 1<sup>st</sup> Grade, and two-three weeks for 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

For older students (3<sup>rd</sup> and up) apply the three-checks system after only a few days of training and explaining.

J. Follow the School Discipline Policy for serious misbehavior

-Send student to office immediately for any act of:

- 1) Disrespect to any staff member
- 2) Dishonesty (deception, lying, cheating or stealing)
- 3) Rebellion or disobedience
- 4) Fighting (physical contact with another with intent to harm)
- 5) Obscene, profane or unkind language

You do not have the liberty to not send a student to the office for these offenses.

**ALWAYS complete a "Disciplinary Office Referral" form before you send any student to the office.** The student must take the form with them when they go to the office so that the headmaster/administrator is not dependent on the student's version of events during the discipline visit.

- K. Never accuse a student of dishonesty without absolute proof. It is better to allow students to get away with suspicious behavior than to falsely accuse them and destroy their trust in you. If you are convinced of their guilt and they deny it, but you cannot prove it, it is best to simply pray that their sins will find them out. God will eventually bring things to light.

- L. Discipline with as little negative emotion as possible.
- Be matter of fact, but gentle and gracious at all times.
  - Avoid negotiating or debating with students. -Say it, expect it, enforce it.
  - The moment you get angry or frustrated you made the situation about YOU.
- M. Be Prepared for and Proactive in dealing with the "Sins of the Classroom"
- Disobedience (immediate/outright AND subsequent/passive)
  - Dishonesty (Exod. 20:15, Eph. 4:28 –includes blame-shifting, making excuses)
  - Discontentment/Complaining (rolling eyes, sighs, Eph. 5:15, Heb. 12:11, Phil. 2:14)
  - Dissension (Strife/quarrels/cliques, Prov. 6:19, I John 4)
  - Dawdling: (Laziness, Proverbs)
- M. Discourage Premature Romances
- Do not allow note passing during or between classes.
  - Do not allow coupling or pairing off between boys and girls.
  - Do not tease or joke about "boyfriends" and "girlfriends."
- O. Rewards (stickers, goodies, treats, trinkets, privileges) may be used for "above and beyond" behavior or accomplishments, but not for "everyday obedience." Meeting normal/typical/everyday expectations such as following instructions or raising hand before speaking may not be managed using reward systems. Rewards and privileges may be given occasionally for exceptional behavior, extraordinary achievements, and significant accomplishments (e.g. a score of 100% on an exam, an improvement of 20% on an exam, exemplary acts of kindness or service, etc.) Rewards should not be seen as manipulative tactics, but as expressions of genuine biblical encouragement.
- P. Compare students against the Scriptures and the school's behavior policies and expectations. NEVER compare the student (academically or behaviorally) to other students. Never make grades public. Never mention one student's performance in the hearing of other students.
- Discipline, correct, challenge, and motivate with grace and kindness.
- Hold a high standard and motivate to excellence, but do so in such a way that the student grows to love the standard. Berating, belittling, and humiliating students or comparing them to others when they fail may get some immediate result, but will breed hatred or resentment for the standards in the student's heart.

*(Some sections adapted from seminars by Matt Whittling, 2001-2015 ACCS RTR Conferences)*