



The Good News

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Tough Love is Tough

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Every parent knows that discipline is necessary in order to raise a child with a disciplined character. If parents hope to equip their children with the tools to succeed in life, both physical and spiritual, the parents must employ whatever means of discipline that will be effective for that child. Some children respond to spanking, while others may more readily respond to a simple look of disappointment or a timeout. The challenge is on the parent to know their child's character and personality and develop a disciplinary system accordingly. Every parent also knows that sometimes the discipline can be just as hard on the parent as it can be on the child. Every parent probably remembers these words from an experience in their own childhood, "This is going to hurt me more than it will hurt you." As children receiving the discipline, we probably had no idea what that meant, but as parents today we understand perfectly...it is difficult to discipline the children we love so much when they do something deserving of it. We call this "tough love" because, while we love our children with all our heart we must often employ "tough" means of making sure our children are raised with the proper values. This concept is nothing new. In fact we find the wisest man to ever live call continually on parents to not "spare the rod" or risk spoiling the child.

However, this concept is just as true when it comes to the spiritual life as it is the physical one. We find Paul, after he wrote a scathing letter to the Corinthians in I Corinthians, write in II Cor. 2:4 "*For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you.*" Paul admits that as he wrote the letter of admonition to the Corinthians it caused him great pain, yet he did it anyway. His purpose,

as he explains, was not to cause them pain as well but that they might know his love for them and accept the truths he was trying to convey. This is every parent's goal in employing any form of discipline...that it is because we love our children that we discipline them that they may learn from their error and do what is right. Interestingly enough, II Cor. 2 is the same context in which Paul encourages the brethren to accept the brother who had been condemned for sin as he had apparently repented. We find that disciplining fellow Christians carries the same principle that we see with parents disciplining their children...tough love is tough. Paul condemned the saints in I Cor. 5 for glorying in the fact that they accepted all walks of life as they tolerated a brother who was living in sin with his father's wife. He called on them to reject this brother, if he would not accept the truth, for two reasons: that a little leaven leavens the whole lump (purity), and that it could bring about a change in the brother as he realized the shame of his sin (discipline). We find a lesson that withdrawing from sinning and erring brethren can be tough. Yet, because the entire congregation of the Corinthians followed the disciplinary plan devised by God, this brother's soul was saved.

We often call God our Father, and rightly so. As Christians, we are His children. As He is the Creator, we as human beings are His creation. He has promised that one day, all those who have not conducted themselves righteously will be punished in the worse way possible...and it will never end. He calls to us to raise the little souls He has entrusted us with to be strong. He calls us to correct sinning and erring brethren. Tough love is tough but, come Judgment Day, imagine how many souls it will save.