Dear Parents,

One of the hardest parts of being a parent is having to discipline your child. No child is perfect and misbehavior is inevitable, but it is so frustrating!

Try to look at this responsibility in a new way. Punishments are unavoidable, but view it as an opportunity to teach your child how to behave. Also, try to understand why your child is behaving that way in the first place. When a young child misbehaves, they are telling you in the only way they know how that they are feeling discouraged, frustrated or angry. Put yourself in your child’s shoes. Are they intentionally trying to act up or are they being curious? Think of times that your child has misbehaved and look at what else is going on at the time. Are you busy on the phone or making dinner? Is your focus on a sibling or another adult? How long has it been since they had your focus? Sometimes when you stop and look at the big picture, it is easier to understand your child. Perhaps a slight change on your part can improve your child’s focus as well!

**Be consistent**

Consistency truly is key when it comes to discipline and it is crucial for preschoolers. Little ones may need to hear something thirty times (sometimes more) before it starts to sink in! As hard as it is, you have to be firm on what you expect from your child. Decide what behavior you will allow (or not allow) and stick with it. Don’t send mixed signals! Don’t fail to set limits because you don’t like to see your child frustrated. Giving in to demands just encourages them to pitch a fit the next time they don’t get their way. There has to be a balance. We all need limits. The younger a child is, the more defined those limits should be. You are the one who must teach them what is acceptable and what is not. The world would be a very scary place if there were no limits.

**Redirection**

Preschoolers are very curious by nature. We want our children to explore and discover the world, but they have to be safe. They also have a fairly short attention span. Make sure you take away temptations to misbehave. Remove them from the area. Redirect them to a new activity and/or location. Offer them something to do that will not result in bad behavior.

**Be on the same page**

Make sure that everyone who is responsible for your child is on the same page as far as behavior and what is okay. If there are different rules at home than there are at grandma’s house, it will be very easy for misbehaving to occur. Be a model for your child’s behavior. Show your kids what you want them to do. If they are playing too rough, show them how to play nice. Make it very clear what you expect from them. This way there is no question whether or not they understand. You must set the tone and the expectation.

**Consequences**

There will be times that consequences are necessary. This is where parents use different techniques such as warnings, time outs, or withholding privileges or treats. Different consequences will work differently on each child. You may have to discover what is effective for your child. Whatever you do, don’t discipline your child out of anger. Count to ten and cool off before you act. An important tip: praise good behavior. Acting out is a sure-fire way to get attention. Praising them when they are doing well lets your child know that they don’t just get attention by misbehaving. Show them that good behavior will get them the attention that they crave.

Discipline is not about what we are doing to our kids, but rather what we are doing for them. Proverbs 22:6 says, “*Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it*”. Give them the training they need. Make it easy for your child to do the right thing!

Take a few minutes and look at this month’s video on discipline.

<https://vimeo.com/parentministry/review/105162922/6552111e4d>

Building Young Disciples,

Pastor Sarah