

# Three R's of Parenting

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The book of Proverbs is filled with passages about parenting. Proverbs 29:15 says, “The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.” This passage shows the effects of both good and bad parenting. God did not create man to train himself by his own wisdom. Paul wrote, “Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Corinthians 3:18–20). Parents need God’s wisdom in the inspired Word. Look at some aspects of parenting that are found in the Scriptures for instruction.

## **Role Models .**

A critical aspect of parenting is being the proper example to a child. Many children are brought into this world by some male and female, only to be abandoned for someone else to take responsibility for rearing them. There are even children who live in the same house with their biological parents yet spend very little time with them due to busy business schedules or various personal interests that exclude the kids. Children “left to themselves” find other people or things to fill up the void in place of their parents. Those “surrogates” in many cases do not hold the moral and spiritual values needed for the proper development of a child. Some professional athletes clearly proclaim, “I am not a role model” to keep young people from following their lives, despite their great popularity. Youth, especially adolescents, are looking to build their own

identity. They see people who look successful in the media and emulate their character. Children should look to their parents for identity. Consider what Solomon said to his son: “My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck” (Proverbs 1:8–9). Again: “My son, give me your heart and let your eyes observe my ways” (Proverbs 23:26). If parents abandon, abuse, or neglect their responsibility to lead, their children will look elsewhere.

## **Reproof .**

Another critical aspect of parenting is guidance and correction. Rearing an immature human being from birth to adulthood is a great challenge to all parents. Solomon said of this immature state, “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of correction will drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15). One must not take this verse by itself to be God’s total instruction for correction. Words are needed with correction. If a child does not understand why he/she received punishment for a certain act, then a perverted understanding will come of discipline. Scripture also teaches that words without penalties are incomplete guidance. “Do not withhold correction from a child, for if you beat him with a rod, he will not die. You shall beat him with a rod, and deliver his soul from hell” (Proverbs 23:13–14). Solomon is not saying a child should be abused or physically injured; the word “beat” could be translated “clap” or to “strike lightly.” Again, “Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction” (Proverbs 19:18). All children need to know that freedom to choose either right or wrong does not free one from the consequences of doing wrong. The loving discipline of godly parents is far better than the cruel treatment of the far country.

## Refuge.

Another critical aspect of parenting is providing a safe and secure place called home. A home is not just a place where one is fed, clothed, and sheltered. Physical necessities are only a small part of the needs of children. Children need emotional, mental, and especially spiritual development in those critical “growing up” years. The dwelling place of the family should be a place where peace is found. It is natural for adolescents to spend more and more time away from their parents to develop relationships with others outside their own immediate family. However, some children leave because they find better refuge in the homes of their peers. For many families, turmoil at home makes it seem more like a place of war than of peace. Solomon wrote, “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted calf with hatred” (Proverbs 15:17). Home is a place where children should want to live, not just have to live.

–Jimmy Clark