

POSITIVE DIRECTION

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Punish your children when they continue in wrong doing. Punish them even though it hurts you more than it does them. Do not try to hide the pain in your heart when you do it. Punish them thoroughly, finish it, do not stop short no matter how you dislike doing it. And now you are still not finished. You have gained nothing yet. Now comes the positive part. Discuss the wrong, why it is wrong, and what would have been the right behavior in the situation. How much happier everyone involved would have been if the right thing had been done. Don't preach; discuss simply, and on the child's level. This level is not too far below yours. You are wicked too. You know how hard it is. Your place is to direct.

This is still primarily negative. It is therefore not complete. If a person asks you the direction to a certain place, you do not tell him all the roads not to take. This would only serve to frustrate him. Likewise when God commands you to direct your child in the way he should go, do not continually point out to him his wrongs. This can easily frustrate the child. He needs positive direction.

The most effective way to give him this is to watch for any accidental step in the right direction and call attention to it as something desirable. Emphasize every little effort to help or cooperate. This is very effective in the classroom and I'm sure that it is the same elsewhere. If there is confusion, no one seems to know exactly what to do and so everyone is doing something different. Call attention to the one closest to doing what is right. You have pointed the direction to all the rest. Most of them are quick to follow.

It seems to be our natural tendency to point out what is wrong and to criticize negatively. We are basically selfish and therefore we look for the bad in others instead of the good. If we are to give proper direction to children we have to turn our sights so that we are looking for the right behavior instead of the wrong. Of course, if at any time we fail to call attention to a step in the right direction and do not commend it, we are failing to give direction to our children. We can easily make them utterly lost and confused by constantly pointing out to them the wrong way, by constantly criticizing their actions.

God gives children to his covenant people in love. He commands us to bring up these children in the love of God. We and our children are both very sinful. But somehow we must hold out a hand of love to those children of God and lead them to Him: they are His. We cannot do it. God hallows our feeble efforts. His hand of love will lead us all home together.

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