

Orthodox Parenting Conference
Saturday, February 8, 2020 at 11 AM – 3 PM CST
Virtual conference on Orthodox Parenting.

EST

12:00-Evangelizing Our Children by Fr. Patrick Cardine

12:30-Difficult Conversations by Dr. Philip Mamalakis

01:00-Spare The Rod... by Fr. John Finley

01:30-Motherhood Expectations by Elissa Bjeletich

02:00-Screen-time & Technology by Jamil Samara

02:30-Family-Based Youth Ministry by Steve Christoforou

03:00-Overcoming Boredom by Fr. David Smith

03:30-Parenting Adult Children by Bp. John of Worcester

Spare The Rod...
by Fr. John Finley

St. Nikolai of Zica

01-30 CONTEMPLATION

To contemplate the Lord Jesus as a Friend of children:

- As a Friend of the angels in heaven who, like children, are innocent, obedient and without passions;
- As a Friend of little children on earth, who easily and simply believe in God;
- As a Friend to the saints, who by labor and grace are purified from sin and become innocent as children.

01-30 HOMILY About how men must become like children in order to be sons of God

"Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (St. Matthew 18:3).

Thus, speaks the Lord and His word is holy and true. What kind of advantage do children have over adults?

They have three advantages:

- in faith, (**mind**)
- in obedience and (**will**)
- in forgiveness. (**heart**)
 - The child asks the parent about everything and whatever the parent replies, the child believes its parent. (**mind**)
 - The child is obedient to its parent and easily subordinates its will to the will of the parent. (**will**)
 - The child is forgiving even though he provokes easily, but the child forgives quickly. (**heart**)

Our Lord requires these three from all men i.e., Faith, Obedience and Forgiveness.

- He seeks that men believe in Him unconditionally, as a child believes in its parent.
- To be unconditionally obedient to Him as a child is to its parent and

- to be forgiving in relation to one another, not to remember evil and not to render evil for evil.

Faith, Obedience and Forgiveness are the three main characteristics of a child's soul. In addition to that, comes **purity** and **joy**.

- A child is not greedy; (**heart**)
- a child is not lustful; and (**will**)
- a child is not vain glorious. (**mind**)

The child has an eye unspoiled by **vices** and a joy unspoiled by **worries**.

O brethren, who can make us over again into children? No one, except the one Christ. He can make us over into children and help us to be born again and, that

- by His example, (**will**)
- by His teaching and (**mind**)
- by the power of His Holy Spirit. (**heart**)

O Lord Jesus, perfect in obedience and meekness, Eternal Child of the Heavenly Father help us to become as infants by faith in You, by obedience toward You and by forgiveness one toward the other. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

My Thoughts:

This does not mean that children need no correction or discipline, but it does mean that they are more easily molded in mind, heart, and will.

Also, we should consider that we are children of God when we discipline our children, and need the same correction from our Heavenly Father as the correction we administer to our children – and to remind ourselves of this truth as we correct our children, and to do so as a loving parent.

Dr. Benjamin Spock

Spock advocated ideas about parenting that were, at the time, considered out of the mainstream. Over time, his books helped to bring about major change.

Previously, experts had told parents that babies needed to learn to sleep on a regular schedule, and that picking them up and holding them whenever they cried would only teach them to cry more and not to sleep through the night. They were told to feed their children on a regular schedule, and that they should not pick them up, kiss them, or hug them, because that would not prepare them to be strong and independent individuals in a harsh world.¹

In contrast Spock encouraged parents to see their children as individuals, and not to apply a one-size-fits all philosophy to them.

His books were criticized for propagating permissiveness and an expectation of instant gratification

¹ Note that this instruction was not given in reference to corrective discipline from parents, but more towards forming good habits.

St. Theophan the Recluse – [Raising them Right](#)

The Developing Child

Eye contact – p.29

Warfare of parents **against sin** (*not against the child*) that dwells in the child p.31

- Arbitrariness of mind
- Self-will
- Pleasure in the faculty of feeling

All 3 of these things are directed to the will in a child – obedience is required

Food and sleep – scheduled and measured pp.32-33

Movement (will) – moderation, a definite schedule, supervision

Senses – pampered vs. strengthened – p.35

Forming attitudes – Chapter 4

Mind p.38

Will p.39

Heart p.41

This is the rule:

- begin with the child's very first breath;
- begin everything at once, and not just one thing;
- do this all
 - unceasingly,
 - evenly,
 - by degrees,
 - without jumps,
 - with patience and expectation,
 - observing a wise gradualness,
 - taking note of the sprouts and making use of them,
 - considering nothing unimportant in such an important matter. p.43

Question:

Psalm 23 – Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. What does the word rod mean?

St. Nikolai of Zica

06-11 HOMILY About the master and the slave

“He who spares his rod hates his son but he who loves him takes care to chastise him.” Proverbs 13:24

God’s love for men transcends the love of men for men as the heaven transcends the earth but, nevertheless, the Man-loving God chastises men. God chastises men not in order to destroy them but to correct and save them.

O blessed chastisement which emanates from love! “For whom the Lord loves, He chastises; and He scourges every son whom He receives” (Hebrews 12:6).

- With what does God chastise? With a rod!
- What kind of rod?
 - The rod of sickness,
 - the rod of misfortune,
 - the rod of loss,
 - the rod of hunger,
 - the rod of crop failure,
 - the rod of drought,
 - the rod of floods,
 - the rod of death of relatives and friends,
 - the rod of evil demons, when He permits them authority over man.

These are the rods of God by which God chastises His children in order that He may correct them and bring them back to their senses, enlighten and save them.

Why should the parent not chastise his children if he truly loves them? The rod is a tool of great love and concern. If the child is not sensitive to spiritual chastisement, the child is sensitive to the rod. The more a child is insensitive to the spirit and conscience, it is more sensitive to the body.

- The body was not given to man that by itself it has meaning,
- but the body is to be a servant of the spirit
 - to help the spirit
 - and to benefit the spirit.

- If **corporal punishment** arouses the spirit in man and the spirit arouses the conscience,
 - then the body has completely fulfilled its duty toward the spirit, its master.
- If the master [spirit] sleeps,
 - then the servants are struck in order to arouse the master [the spirit].
- If the servants awaken their master in the hour of danger, they will not lament the blows that they have received for they saved their master.
 - And the awakened and saved master will know how to repay his servants.
 - Hence, in truth, “He who spares his rod hates his son.”
 - Whosoever spares the servant, betrays the master.

O All-wise Lord open the hearts of the parents that they may receive this holy instruction of Yours. To You be glory and thanks always. Amen.

Some self-proclaimed biblical commentators distinguish between “the” rod and “a” rod – saying that “the rod” does not refer to a physical rod, or switch, or belt, or paddle, or whatever, but that “a” rod does. They dismiss this biblical verse and others from the Proverbs as referring to a physical object (“the rod”) and interpret the verse as a metaphorical reference to the development of a “Holy Spirit-driven” conscience. While I don’t disagree with this end goal, I personally do not agree that a physical rod is out of the question.

My Thoughts:

One of my spiritual fathers taught me three degrees of seriousness in disciplining children:

1. General naughtiness - bad
2. Disobedience - worse
3. Talking back to mother – the most serious.
 - a. Think about it – if we grow up freely talking back disrespectfully to our mother, as adults we may talk back disrespectfully to our mother - the Church, and her teaching and guidance in our lives. This spirit of disrespect in our souls must be addressed at an early age.

Cautions:

1. If we are angry at our children, we should wait until the anger inside of us subsides before administering the corrective discipline.
2. We should place limits upon ourselves (beforehand) in terms of how much discipline is administered, in order to keep ourselves in check, and not sin against our children.
3. Finally, children discern the difference when we discipline them out of anger, and when we discipline them out of love.

Regardless how we choose to correct our children,

- we should (in my opinion) never administer corrective discipline with the hand, and
- we should always embrace our children with a big hug and a kiss and tell them we love them after the discipline is administered,
 - because we know that God loves us when He corrects us.

V. Rev. John Finley has been a staff member of the Department of Missions and Evangelism for the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America since 1996.

Fr. John is a graduate of St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology with an STM (Sacred Theology Master’s) Degree in 1981. He taught Theology and Liturgical Studies in the Academy from 1979 to 1992 in the residence programs of study. During that time he developed two correspondence courses in Liturgical Studies and has shared much of the content of those courses in his Singing the Triumphal Hymn podcasts on Ancient Faith Radio:

<https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/triumphalhymn>

More recently, Fr. John has worked with Dn. Adam Roberts in spearheading a project to move the correspondence courses online, and additionally offering tutoring for homeschool parents through St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology: www.saaot.edu