

**# 473 11/17//08 The consequences of lack of discipline**

Mother and son sat in my office. He was skipping school and failing his classes. When he was in school, he was rude and disrespectful to his teachers. I talked to him about what was expected of him at school, why he needed to be in school and the consequences of continuing his current behavior. His mom confirmed what I was saying. As soon as she began to speak, he turned vicious. He stood up and approached her in a menacing stance. He cursed her, his absent father and the school. He glanced at me and ran from the office.

I closed the office door knowing that it would do no good to pursue him. I sat down by the mother. She broke into deep, body-shaking sobs. “I can’t do anything with him. He stays out all night, skips school and stays in bed when he is home. He is verbally abusive to his sisters. He curses at me, and he even hit me once. I haven’t been able to control him since he was two.”

I wish I had heard this scenario only once. Unfortunately, there are many children and teens that are terrorizing their families. The parents have lost control. They are having problems with school and the law.

In Proverbs 19:18, we read, “Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death.” To his death? How would lack of discipline lead to death? The lifestyle of the young man in my office could very well have led to physical death because of risky choices. However, any child who is not required to live by rules and within boundaries will find that his torment feels like death.

Discipline must begin early. A two-year-old checks his boundaries to see who is in control. Of course, he thinks he would like to do what he wants. And, he fusses, cries or has a tantrum when he does not get his way. But, that is a deciding moment for his future. As his parent, you will either require him to follow the rules, or you will let him have his way. He will learn to live within boundaries in all areas of his life, or he will be miserable at school, at home and, eventually, at work. The choice is yours.

Next week, how to establish control when a child is young.

