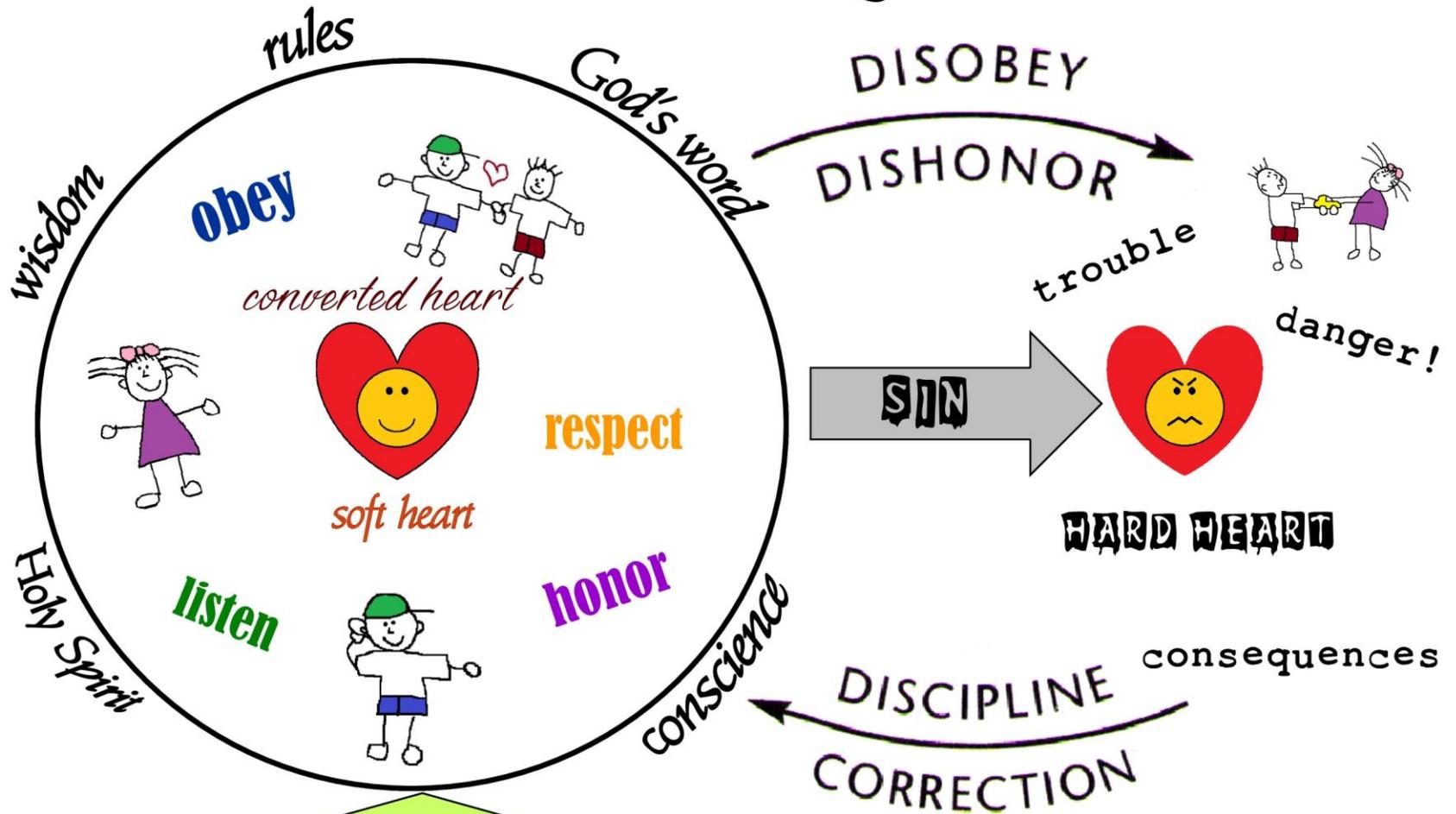


The Circle of Blessing



"I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you." Isaiah 44:22

forgive me? I'm sorry . . .

The Circle of Blessing

It is precisely because children are not born in a neutral state (Ephesians 2:1-3, Romans 3, Galatians 5:19-21), but in rebellion to God, that the gospel must be at the forefront of discipline. Children are to obey their parents because God has commanded them to do so. One of the means, if not the primary means, that God uses to draw children to himself is this confrontation that occurs when children are called to obey God.

Our motive is to do everything for the glory and honor of God. But, it will go well for you if a child obeys his parents. Children are to obey because it brings honor God. Obedience is not a way of earning favor with God. At the same time, since God is the Lord of Heaven and Earth, things will go better for people if they live in accordance with God's rule.

Ephesians 6:1-3 is the basis for this concept: things will go well for those who honor and obey parents. It is imperative that children learn to honor and obey. It will go well for them. Their obedience is not secured so that the parent can be obeyed for his or her own sake. A parent must be obeyed for for the child's sake! They are the beneficiaries of honoring and obeying Mom and Dad.

The immediate wellbeing of children is tied to their obedience. For example, a young child who constantly defies his parents places himself in physical and spiritual danger. He may place himself physically in harm's way simply by ignoring parental direction that is designed to protect him. Since God is the one who sets up all authorities on earth (Colossians 1:15-20), submitting to authority is the path of wisdom and safety for a child. This does not necessarily conflict with the motivation of doing things for God's honor—hopefully, the blessings of obedience and the desire to honor God will find mutual expression in your child's heart!

The rich young man of Matthew 19 was one who benefited from obeying the commandments but whose heart was not right before God. But on one level, things obviously went well for him. This is why God must be the first point of reference in all that is done. It is the child who will benefit most from obedience to you. The issue of coming to faith in Christ is still a key issue. If the rich young man does not turn to God in repentance and gratitude for the temporal blessings he has received from following the way of authority, all that he has gained will be counted against him.

Authority has become a code word for tyranny in modern culture. We often hear that each person should be his own authority. Ephesians 6 warns against this idea. A brief examination of the lives of young people in today's world quickly reveals that things are not going well for many of them. God's Word stands in severe contrast to the world. Honoring and obeying parents is clearly a good thing, and it is good when a child comes to realize that his world operates according to God's direction—and that things will go well for him when he embraces that standard. Yet the job of the Christian parent is not done at that point. The absolute necessity of coming to faith in Christ must always be stressed. The commands of God show us our inability to obey in our own strength. Only the power of the gospel can keep children (and parents) from thinking they can be like the young man in Matthew 19, who thought he could please God by his obedience.

The Bible stresses the importance of teaching authority as the foundation of biblical parenting. Living in joyful submission to the authority of God should be the object of parental instruction. What makes this goal possible is a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the focus of Ephesians 6:1-3. The Circle of Blessing begins by acknowledging and embracing the control of God over all of life. This knowledge will always point us to embracing his Son through repentance and faith.