

THE TIME TO OUTLAW CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF CHILDREN IS NOW!

Why is violence among our youth on the increase in our communities and in our educational institutions? Why can't our future leaders communicate their ideas, feelings and grievances without resulting to violence as a tool of redress?

I do not presume to think that I have discovered the final answer to one of the most divisive issues in parenting, but I do think that I have uncovered some truths, or at least some nagging questions, that deserve to be reckoned with as a parent or an educator who has chosen to use corporal punishment in raising your children.

Research shows that children who are spoken to learn to speak, children who are listened to learn to listen, those who are abused become abusers and those who are neglected grow up to neglect their offspring. Children who are given love grow to appreciate love.

The increase in violence in our communities and in our institutions of learning has to do with the way children are trained or brought up. Today one cannot pick up a news paper or switch on the TV without being reminded that we are in a world dominated by violence.

There is no better time than now to take the Later Day Saint Church President Gordon B. Hinkley's' wise observations about non-violent child upbringing to heart. Even though there seems there is no solution to the problem, there is one- not one that works instantly, but one that does work in the long term. Here is what President Hinkley says on the subject:

"It is so plainly evident that both the great good and the terrible evil found in the world today are the sweet and the bitter fruits of the rearing of yesterday's children. As we train a new generation, so will the world be in a few years. If you are worried about the future, then look today at the up-bringing of children. In large measure the harshness that characterises so much of our society is an outgrowth of the harshness imposed upon children years ago." From "The Environment of Our Homes" Tambuli, Oct.-Nov. 1985, 1

Experts are increasingly fingering Corporal Punishment - the infliction of physical pain on the body of a child (in Ghana even matured ladies on their buttocks by male teachers) for the purpose of punishment or controlling behaviour. A host of relevant professional organisations including Paediatrics, Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Social Workers as well as Religious Leaders among others have published position papers opposing or strongly discouraging corporal punishment of children.

International research on the harmful effects of physical punishments is so compelling that the United Nations has initiated a global programme to eliminate it. Not only is corporal punishment of children and matured ladies a violation of human right, the United Nations argued in a 2005 UNESCO publication that according to a preponderance of research, it is also "counterproductive, relatively ineffective, dangerous and harmful."

In 1979, Sweden became the first country to ban corporal punishment of children both in school and at home. Today, more and more countries are doing the same. Israel also joined these civilised countries in 2000. This is the nation which received the Ten Commandments from God including the over cited Good Book for the justification of the abuse of little children in the name of a loving God who says: "What you do to the least of these, you do to me". Leaders of those countries concluded that the cost of corporal punishment were too high for a society that called itself civilised.

Spanking teaches children that human interaction is based on force, and that might make right. The more a child is spanked, the greater is the likelihood that that child will become an adult who deals with others, not by reason and good example, but by force. Spanking also teaches children to fear the adult that they are supposed to bond with. It teaches children that violence is the only way to resolve problems – which unfortunately happens to be the law of the jungle.

Here are some few of the many effects of corporal punishment on the child: • Research consistently demonstrates that corporal punishment creates and maintains "wilful defiance" and other unmanageable behavioural problems. (Thus, the notion that "wilful defiance" deserves corporal punishment is exactly counterproductive.)

- Children who are spanked have lower average intelligence scores, and demonstrate poorer school performance. This is not because they are less intelligent, but because they are more reluctant to demonstrate their intelligence for fear of being 'wrong' and, as a result, harshly judged.*
- Spanked children show less creativity and are less inclined to take healthy and appropriate risks; yet are more likely to take inappropriate risks.*
- Children who are spanked demonstrate a diminished ability to say 'no' in personally demeaning or dangerous situations (including drug use and sexual situations) - especially when encouraged by peers.*
- Spanking has been shown to significantly increase violent/bullying behaviour (especially in boys) and shyness (in girls).*
- Children who are spanked have higher rates of constipation of the bowels, depression, substance abuse, anxiety, and irrational fears/phobias.*
- Long-term studies indicate that girls who are spanked show a greater risk of ending up in abusive marriages; boys who are spanked have a higher than average chance of becoming abusive spouses.*
- Adults who were spanked as children tend to be less happy in their marriages.*
- Adults who were spanked as children tend to reject the religion of their parents.*
- Most often teachers get into trouble by accidentally injuring students which mostly result in court cases. Students are permanently damaged, never to forget the teacher who caused the injury and the teacher never to forget the incident.*

• *Spanking of the buttocks can stimulate immature feelings in some children. It is even an offence to touch the buttocks of ladies, something which is illegal and a religious crime. It is only in the classroom that the state allows such an act. Mature ladies are spanked on their buttocks.*

• *When a child's only inhibition against a misdeed is the fear that he will be caught and punished, he is strongly tempted to be more careful not to be caught the next time. If they happen to be successful in outwitting authority... the situation becomes very serious.*

• *If the punishment takes the form of loss of affection or approval, the reaction of the child is very likely to be hatred. He may at first try to win back the approval he has lost by good conduct, but if the punishment is even slightly overdone it is very likely to lead to hatred and a consequent attempt to retaliate.*

• *If punishment is effective, the probable result is an attitude of fear. It is probably one of the largest factors in the production of defective speech. Worst of all, the child brought up in fear shows little originality or initiative in his thinking.*

• *The person who is most intolerant and cruel in his treatment of others is usually one who has been brought up on punishment. His attitude is one of resentment and, not being able to retaliate upon those who inflicted the punishment, he takes it out on others. This feeling is accentuated if the child feels that he deserved the punishment. While he admits that he deserves the punishment, it leaves a rankling, which makes him totally unable to show consideration to other children, and he becomes cruel in his treatment of them.*

• *Located deep in the buttocks is the sciatic nerve, the largest nerve in the body. A severe blow to the buttocks, particularly with an instrument such as a piece of wood, could cause bleeding in the muscles that surround that nerve, resulting mostly in injury of the leg involved.*

• *Research shows that the child's hand is particularly vulnerable because its ligaments, nerves, tendons and blood vessels are close to the skin which has no underlying protective tissue. Striking the hands of younger children is especially dangerous to the growth plates in the bones which, if damaged, can cause deformity or impaired function. It can also cause fractures and dislocation.*

• *School spanking also affects learning. Children remain in constant fear and find it difficult to concentrate on the lesson taught.*

• *Early childhood is a very sensitive and critical period in brain development. Stress associated with pain and fear caused by spanking can negatively affect the development and function of a child's brain.*

All of the above - and more - have been attributed not to abusive levels of corporal punishment or violence to children, but, rather, to commonly accepted level of spanking. Ignoring or disbelieving these findings does not make them less true.

There is an over use of beating children all over our dear nation, and this is too bad for us. For the more they are beaten the angrier they get. As they grow they rebel against society. Let us remember that anytime a child suffers from violence it is the larger society that pays for it.

We need to review the training programmes in our Teacher Training Colleges. Why is it that no Teacher Training Colleges instruct prospective teachers to be in the use of the cane, yet they still use it with impunity on their job? If the cane were to be an effective tool of education, all Training Institutions in this country would have trained their prospective teachers in its use.

It is sad that children are still sitting in class full of fear of their teachers on whom their future depend. Since it has been found out that fear and learning do not go hand in hand, one may ask "what are our children learning in class where the teachers over rely on the rod as a class control tool or a teaching aid?" Why should a child be punished for not understanding a lesson taught? Why should a child be punished when the parents fail to provide the necessary learning materials? Why should a child be punished for coming late to school when the parents bring the child late to school? Why should a child be punished when the parents fail to attend PTA meetings? Let us be realistic by helping our children understand what is expected of them rather than treating them like pieces of objects.

It is all due to the fact that our Teacher Training Colleges' programmes are insufficient, particularly in preventive work and conflict resolution. There is the need for the review of Teacher Training Programmes to better adapt them to an adult presence in schools with adequate competence to combat violation of students rights. There is the need to focus on alternative forms of discipline other than the rod.

It is a betrayal of trust and a weakness on the part of educators to spank students for not understanding a task. No student deserved to be punished for not understanding a lesson taught. If they knew the lesson they wouldn't be in school. It is the teacher's responsibility to use a different method.

A serious problem in school is the approach to student-teacher conflicts. Most teachers see student-teacher conflicts as a battle which they must win. When conflicts arise, as they always do, most teachers try to resolve them so that they win or at least they don't lose.

Teacher power generates resistance, retaliation, rebellion and often organising efforts of the victims eager to overthrow the teacher. Students always try to hit back at teachers they perceive as their enemies. It is interesting to know that students see teachers as natural enemies, dictators to be resisted by whatever means or weak people they take advantage of.

It is paradoxical but true: teachers will have more influence on students by refusing to use their power and authority over them. This can easily be achieved when teachers learn to use the no-loose method of resolving conflicts. In this, the method approaches a conflict – of – no - needs situation so that the parties to the conflict join together in

search of a situation acceptable to both – one that requires no one losing.

Conflicts are bound to happen so long as human beings remain together, due to differences in opinion and ideology. It therefore, goes without saying that: Conflict is inevitable whenever people find themselves in relationships with others-individually or in groups. But schools particularly generate frequent and continuing conflicts, because no other institution houses within its walls such an amazingly heterogeneous collection of people-all ages, all racial and ethnic backgrounds, all levels of intellectual endowment, all degrees of educational expertise, all levels of authority, all degrees of social and emotional maturity, all variations of talent. Is it any wonder that there is so much conflicts in schools?

It therefore goes to say that it is practically impossible to take away this conflict from the school due to the population of the school. What is important is to train people in skills and methods for resolving conflict constructively. Schools require nothing short of a revolution in conflict management – constructively resolving the inevitable conflicts so that everyone can get his or needs met and so develop to his or her fullest potential. This includes educators, students, parents, guardians, secretaries and administrators.

The major conflict in schools between teachers and students is also due to the fact that the old generation does not want to accept the culture of the new generation. Research studies support the notion that people are hostile toward those they do not understand.

Understanding a different culture or a different age group will increase one's acceptance of their behaviour and characteristics. Teachers will find themselves feeling more accepting of their students when teachers understand the basis for the students' beliefs and values. It is also then that they can guide the students through and help them make changes in their behaviour. The old generation can also learn from the innovative values of the youth.

The easiest ways for teachers to help students change their values is for teachers to model the values they want their students to pick. The double standard in most schools is the major obstacle to teachers influencing students' behaviour. "Do as I say and not as I do" is not a very effective way to teach values. The only thing it teaches students is that when you are strong enough you can make others obey rules you don't have to obey and that might make right.

This is one reason why peer-modelling is so powerfully influential, it is almost never done by lecturing, almost always by action. This is what every educator, parents and guardians have to do. Do it, don't talk about it! Practice, don't preach!

When parents and educators come face to face with the resistance of their children in terms of value collision, the only thing they need to do is to pray the prayer written by Reinhold Niebuhr. It is as import to us today as it was so many years ago.

*God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,*

And the wisdom to know the difference.

Culture is dynamic; today's culture is different from that of yesterday. Today's youths have their culture. They have their own language and ways of doing things. This, we cannot change; we can only guide them through and not condemn it. Condemning it would not solve the problem but rather compound the problem.

We really need the serenity to accept the things we cannot change - our children's values, beliefs and convictions. And this really needs to become the teacher's prayer. Whether we like it or not, this is their culture. The only thing we can do is to accept it and help them make some changes to what we see to be wrong with it. The antagonistic approach to this would only make them more rebellious and defiant, and we need to be blamed for this, not them.

Let us not forget that what this generation is passing through, the generation before it had its own share, so would the generation after this one. So is the world.

We all need a commitment to resolve all conflicts with our children so that no one loses. Administrators, teachers, parents and guardians will equip children with the skills to become a new generation of world citizens who will not use violence in dealing with conflicts between individuals, between groups and between nations. This must start from our homes and schools. Parents need to be democratic in dealing with their children.

Educators need to involve their students in school rule setting. Students' view should be considered when taking decisions that affect their life. The idea of the Stone Age that "children should be seen and not be heard" should be done away with. Schools that take into account students' opinion on school matters have less student demonstrations and vandalism. This belief in the Stone Age ideology by the older generation is the major cause of most students' violent demonstrations in our educational institutions.

Let us remember that our children today do not need beatings, what they need to survive in this hostile world is love. Research shows that violent parents produce violent children; so are schools that rely on the rod as an educational tool or teaching aid. Schools that use the rod the most are the most violent schools, they do poorly both academically and socially. Children who are beaten the most are the worst behaved kids. Schools that do not rely on the rod have well behaved children, students learn well without the fear of their educators. They relate well to their teachers and when they don't understand a lesson, they ask questions without the fear of being punished or shouted at. The students respect their teachers because the teachers respect them. So it is in homes where children are not punished.

If the rod were really an effective tool of teaching, children would not be beaten multiple times for the same offence. Schools that rely on the rod would have been the best schools both academically and socially and children who were constantly beaten would have been the best behaved kids. It is rather the opposite. What our children need are parents and educators to whom they can look with respect rather than fear. They need examples of what do or not to do. Children are often only given a catalogue of what they must not do and not what they should do and why.

It is a well known fact that the highest proportion of corporal punishment in Ghana occurs in the rural areas and public schools. It is unreasonable and unfair that parents' financial status and their children's geographical location should determine the degree to which their children may be legally victimised.

Let us remember that our educational institutions still remain the only institutions legalised by the state to abuse children's right irrespective of their age. And it also the only institution authorised by the state to sexually abuse matured ladies by beating them on their buttocks, something which is a felony outside the school set up. It is also the only institution authorised by law to train street fighters and women beaters and these trainers are being paid with the tax payers' money. It also remains the only institution which is above our constitution as far as violence against children is concern.

I can think of no greater shame in this modern time and in this so called civilised society than for children to be afraid of going to school and worst still going back home after school, whatever the reasons. So long as we rely on the rod as an educational tool both at home and in schools, we will only produce a generation of adults who will hate. For hate is the consequence of fear, we fear something before we hate it. A child who fears, becomes an adult who hates. And that is too dangerous for the future of this dear nation.

Abraham Lincoln of the USA once said: "It is my pleasure that my children are free and happy, and unrestrained by parental tyranny. Love is the chain whereby to bind a child to its parents". Let us all endeavor to keep this in mind. It is only LOVE that can heal the world and it is what our children need. Sincere LOVE.

As a nation, we must do everything in our power to ensure the safety of our children. When children, teenagers and even mature students go to school afraid of being bullied, or beaten, or worse, it is the ultimate betrayal of adult responsibility. It communicates the victory of moral chaos and also sends the wrong notion to our children. No parent in this nation -- no matter their income; no matter their geographical location -- should be forced to send their children to schools where violence reigns. Parents should be given more say in matters concerning the education of their children.

This culture notion that if children were not engineered and if we did not manipulate them they would grow up as beasts in the field is the wildest fallacy in the world. Children are naturally programmed to learn from their own environment. What they need is guidance not manipulation.

Most of the time, children do not 'misbehave' out of defiance or avoidance of reality but for hurt feelings from parents or others and anger over feelings of powerlessness in a relationship and not having enough control over oneself.

What they need are choices rather than commands. Decision-making empowers children; commands invite a power struggle. Just as verbal praise is a powerful re-enforcer for most children, verbal scolding can be an effective punishment. As with other punitive methods, however, over-reliance on scolding will drastically lessen its

effectiveness.

Let us join the civilised world in outlawing corporal punishment both at home and in schools. Let us focus on alternatives which are more effective in making responsible and effective adults. Let us learn from those nations that have outlawed it and those schools in this country that do not rely on the rod in the course of their educational programmes.

Children in schools that do not rely on the rod are not more human than those kids in schools where they rely on the rod. Or is it that some children in this country are more vicious than others that we need to maintain the culture of violence in those schools? Let us stop this segregation and discriminatory mentality and do the right thing.

The promised reward for schools that do not or would not rely on the rod as an educational tool is competency and pleasure in presiding over efficient schools where children are happy and learning well.

According to Dr. Murray Straus, Co Director, Family Research Laboratory, of the University of New Hampshire: "A society with little hitting of children is likely to result in fewer people who are alienated, depressed, or suicidal, and in fewer violent marriages. These include lower crime rates, especially for violent crimes; increased economic productivity; and less money spent on controlling or treating crime and mental illness... A society that brings up children by caring, humane, and non-violent methods is likely to be less violent, healthier, and wealthier."

Let us remember that so long as violence against children continues with impunity in the name of discipline, violent demonstrations, attacks on teachers and vandalism in our schools would never end, so would the fight to end violence against women be a mirage. Let us treat our children with love and respect. Let us treat our students and pupils as human beings who deserve to be protected and respected. Let us teach them by our own demonstration of our values. Let us stop the beating and start the nurturing. For children who are brought up with violence would grow up to be violent and also abuse their wives and children. Abusers were once abused and bullies were once bullied.

Let us all aspired for our children to do the right things for the right reasons not simply to avoid punishment. They should have the desire to do the right things and avoid the wrong ones because of their love and concern for others, and the respect of the laws. This is the hallmark of the future children of this dear nation, children who freely choose their responsibilities in life for the simple reason and with a cheerful heart.

In order that our children respect, let us respect them. In order that they respect others' views, let us respects their views. In order that our children are taught to speak the truth, it is necessary that they learn to hear it. What goes into the mind goes to feed the mind and shapes the individual. Let us all endeavour to focus on parent-child relation rather than child-parent relation. This is the only way out of the mess we find ourselves today.

It is unfortunate and sad that today's children do not have any role models other than film stars which are not real. As a parent or an educator, live so that when your children think of fairness and integrity, they think of you.

It is true that it is not the intention of any parents to destroy their own children. That's why we need to appreciate today's parents. They are today's heroes who are trying hard to put their children on the right track of life for fear of losing them to the street or to the violent culture around us. Unfortunately, they are using the wrong methods which eventually end them doing what they were avoiding. This is simply because no one has ever taught them an alternative other than what they have seen their parents and educators do over the years – over reliance on the rod and using violence to teach non-violence; an ideology of the Stone Age.

Today, we have somehow succeeded in safeguarding the physical development and education of the majority of our children, we also have to pay closer attention to their emotional needs.

Parents and educators can be the most powerful and effective social change agents – as long as they are given the resources and social support they need to fulfil their potential.

Let us create the platform for a national debate of this issue and together support one another in raising tomorrow's leaders. What most parents lack is the courage to put their children first. Let us help them do this. Why do you struggle so much to make wealth and neglect the very people you might one day leave it for? We need to balance the two. It is just a matter of choice.

As things stand now, it would really be naïve for any one to predict that this nation would be a better place for the next generation if we do not change the way we educate our children. Let us have faith in ourselves to have faith in our children. "Hope is the only thing left for us in a bad time." An Irish Proverb

For those parents who drag their children to schools and insist on teachers to punish them, they should remember that it is a sign of weakness on the part of the parents. Teachers are able to control forty children at a time and as a parent you cannot take care of one or two children. That is too bad. And any one who consents to the use of corporal punishment is giving permission for another adult to abuse his or own child. That is neglect and abuse.

Abolishing of force as a justification for child discipline is necessary. Verbal parent-child interactions enhance the child's cognitive ability. Education by force, punishment, suppression and the rod, will only train a generation of slaves. People who would not use their heads, but would only act for fear of being punished - people who would respect traffic regulations as long as the Police Officer stands-by. Teaching people the right way to live is the finest work there is, and it is the most difficult. Let us all aspire to teach children how to live right so that when they grow they do not depart from it.

Studies demonstrate that eliminating corporal punishment does not increase

misbehaviour in homes or schools. Systematic use of positive alternatives however has being shown to decrease misbehaviour significantly.

For those who thumb through the Bible to justify the abuse of defenceless children, I would say: Scripture Does Not Support Spanking.

The Old Testament does have a reference to corporal punishment, which is the support of its proponents' biblical defence. The Book of Proverbs 23:13. Proverbs, taken by itself, is questionable, particularly when viewed as the rationale for a parent's disciplinary foundation. Proponents of spanking forget that we are under a new dispensation-a new covenant of love.

Questionable because contextual interpreters of the Bible - as opposed to literal interpreters wonder if "rod" is not used metaphorically, as in a shepherd's rod. A shepherd would never beat his sheep - they are too precious and delicate. Also, could a "rod of violence" be used to bring comfort, as in "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."? God's truths do not contradict each other. A shepherd uses his rod to gently guide his flock - not to strike them. It is known that the fright of sudden noise alone can induce in sheep a shock which suppresses fertility. A sheep's guardian, whose job it is to protect the economic value of his herd, is aware of the sensitivity of his flock's constitution. Moreover, in that part of the world shepherds go before their sheep and the sheep follow them.

"Rod" may also be understood as a unit of measure that figuratively refers to the Torah (like our term "scales of justice"). In other words, we can interpret the proverb: "Spare your child the 'rod' (the Torah), and they won't 'measure up.'"

Ultimately, the Old Testament must be understood through the prism of the New Testament - the fulfilment of the law. Indeed, it has been consistently demonstrated in the New Testament that the severe sanctions of the Old Testament were abrogated by the mild and gentle laws of Christ. The New Testament has a very different way of dealing with sinners than did the Old Testament. As an example, let us examine the parable of the Prodigal Son.

A son hurts his father deeply by abandoning righteous ways and pursuing a life of sin and folly. In response, does the father pursue the child to give him a whipping for the "open act of wilful disobedience?" No. The father, being a wise man, allows his son to experience the logical consequences of his actions until he is so devastated and full with sadness, estrangement and guilt that he comes running back to his father. The father then throws a party for the prodigal son. Was it to celebrate the son's immoral behaviour? No, it was to celebrate the victory of Love over sin. The father of the prodigal son concentrated on a more important motivator: building a relationship that is so strong, so unquestionably loving, that the son will never wish to "leave his house" again.

All children learn through their own mistakes. Children should be allowed to experience the natural consequences of their own actions, and this should be within the child's age limit. That was exactly what this father did.

All this was at the time when prostitutes were burnt to death? (Leviticus 21:9); this was also at the time when girls who were discovered not to be virgins on the day of their marriage were stoned to death (Deuteronomy 22: 21). Witches were also stoned to death (Leviticus 20:27). People were also forbidden from wearing clothes made of blended fibbers. (Today, everybody does it, even the fundamentalists, though it is forbidden in the Bible (Deuteronomy 22:11). Women were also discouraged from publicly voicing out their opinions or arguing with men, (I. Timothy 2:11-12). Why is it that those proponents of spanking who believe they are performing a religious duty don't practice all the above mentioned duties of a religious person? Or is it that the Bible allows us to select what is in our interest? No. Today we are under a new dispensation and under a new law of LOVE which supersedes the MOSAIC LAWS of old. Those who love Christ keep His commandments. And these are part of those commandments:

“What you do to the least of these, you do to me”.

“Whoso shall offend one of these ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck. And that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” Matthew 18:6-7

Let it be understood by the proponents of spanking that the rod as used in the Bible is not the rod but the word of God. This is explicitly demonstrated in the book of Isaiah. Isaiah: 11:4but with righteousness he would judge the needy, with justice he would give decisions for the poor of the earth. He would strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he would slay the wicked.

Here, the rod of his mouth is the word; for Jesus never used the rod to strike the earth but His words which were so bitter to the point of causing His death.

The statement “spare the rod and spoil the child” means spare the word of God and spoil the child. The true training of a child begins with the use of the word of God. For we teach children the word of God and when they grow they do not depart from it. When one trains a child with the cane, what would that child not depart from?

Using the same kind of selective reading or just thumbing through the Bible to support one's actions, one could just as easily cite the Bible as an authority for the practice of Slavery, the Rigid Suppression of Women, Polygamy, Incest and Infanticide. The brutal and vindictive practice of corporal punishment cannot be reconciled with the major themes of the New Testament which teach love and forgiveness and a respect for the beauty, sanctity and dignity of children, and which overwhelmingly reject violence and retribution as a means of solving human conflicts.

Through the wisdom of Christ's new mandate (John 13:34), we must learn the methods that will allow us to deal with our children's transgressions the way God deals with ours. To do less is to diminish in our children's eyes the very love of God. To do less is to live out the role of the servant in the parable who, forgiven his debts by the just King, exacts punishments upon those who owed him (Matt 18: 21-35). We need to demonstrate the love of God by our deeds for our children to see. Going to Church or the Mosque or just by praying is not enough. Our children need to see us

live by what we proclaim-the love of God. Head knowledge of the Good Books is not enough, let us cultivate the culture of love around ourselves for our children to emulate.

When God reaches out to us with arms of love and forgiveness, but we treat our children to physical punishment, we are acting the part of the ungrateful servant. Will not God be faithful to his word and "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us?" (Matt 6:12)

For those Christians who continue to abuse their children in the name of discipline, I would say: "You ought to prepare a defence to Christ's pronouncements of love when He said:

"What you do to the least of these, you do to me".

"Whoso shall offend one of these ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck. And that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Matthew 18:6

I am happily inviting all intelligent, considered and charitable responses to this article. Let us contribute our ideas to this issue. Whether we like it or not, one day, not too far from now, it would be outlawed and Ghana would join the civilised world in protecting the right, dignity and sanctity of children. If ever there was an issue that should not be decided on the basis of feeling alone, it is this one.

One day soon, we would look back as civilized humanity, with astonishment and pity at the time when people believed hitting children was good for them and was a religious duty as those who crucified Christ taught they were doing the work of God.

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