

“Musar”

We were in elementary school but the memory is still quite vivid. I won't say what she did, but , my older sister was in big trouble and dad on a rampage. (I probably tattled . . . can't remember.)

The old saying goes, “Experience is the best teacher,” but I disagree. 'I' learned from *her* mistake. She received *correction and discipline* and I received valuable *instruction*. That was definitely the **best** way to learn.

There is a beautiful Hebrew word used a number of times in the Proverbs. Its meaning has a connection to my learning experience. Though there were two of us, three if you count dad, there was *instruction* and *correction* and *discipline* all at the same time. The Hebrew word ‘*musar*’ means *instruction* and *correction* and *discipline* all at the same time. (Though not smooth English, we might consider ‘instructive discipline’ or ‘disciplinary instruction’ as descriptive translations of *musar*.)

Parents sometimes forget the purpose of *discipline*. It is not to get even or punish (administer justice), but to provide *instruction*. In scripture *instruction* has the purpose of providing *discipline*, that is, *self-discipline*.

***A wise son accepts his father's discipline,
But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.***

--Proverbs 13:1

‘Discipline’ in this verse is the Hebrew word *musar*. It includes the simple *instruction* that comes when a father tells or shows his child how something works or when he explains right and wrong in life. Ideally instruction is accepted by the child who then adjusts his attitude and behavior accordingly: *self-discipline*. If the outcome is imperfect the father may choose to

correct; still a part of *musar*. Where *instruction* and *correction* are rejected by the child, *discipline* follows, still a part of *musar*.

An excellent present-day illustration of *musar* is found in coaching. Coaches give verbal *instruction*, apply hands-on *training*, give *correction*, and require physical *discipline*. In extreme cases they will ‘bench’ a player or kick the player off the team for misconduct, each a form of *discipline*. *Instruction, training, correction, discipline: musar*. Each element of the coach's training program is singular in purpose, to help the athlete excel in competition.

In the same way that I learned from my sister's discipline, God wanted ancient Israel to learn from discipline, that is, the discipline they had received from God in their past: *musar*. (Read about this in Deuteronomy 11:2-9.)

The general purpose of *musar* in Proverbs is to equip the child to excel in life. More specifically, it is to equip the child for life before God.

When the Apostle Paul instructed Christian fathers concerning their children to "***bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord***" (Ephesians 6:4), he was bringing forward the Hebrew concept of *musar*.

Do not think this that is a nice little Hebrew word study...this is about life!

Parents, be wise. Apply *musar*.
Children, be wise. Love *musar*.

Musar is life!