

Immediate Press Statement

The Christian Citizenship Network of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa

Mark Penrith (Chairman)

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In Brief

Holy Scripture has clear instruction on the discipline of children. This instruction includes spanking. It is outrageous to propose banning spanking as administered by loving Christian parents committed to the best interests and welfare of their children. State legislation forbidding this would be a direct rejection of biblical teaching. We are obliged as Christians to inform the government that we must obey God rather than men. We urgently appeal to all reasonable members of government not to go through with legislation that is patently antichristian and will make criminals of all Bible believing Christians.

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Detailed response to the South African Human Rights Commission's proposal to outlaw spanking

Nobody cares for children more than God. This care is manifested in the extraordinary love of children shown by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Holy Scripture has clear instruction on the discipline of children. This instruction includes spanking. Those who neglect to discipline their children carefully are said to hate them and not love them.

The proliferation of violent and criminal behaviour in society is partly the result of parents failing to discipline their children. It certainly is not the result of godly and Christian discipline. *It is outrageous to propose banning spanking as administered by loving Christian parents committed to the best interests and welfare of their children.* Such evil legislation will only contribute towards more children growing up undisciplined, violent and abusive.

There is a clear commandment from God for parents to discipline their children. This commandment includes the use of the rod. *State legislation forbidding this would be a direct rejection of biblical teaching.*

We are obliged as Christians to inform the government that we must obey God rather than men. We cannot possibly submit to wicked legislation. We love our children too much. We do not desire their destruction. We will not hate our children and therefore, with God's help, *we will follow his Word in the proper training, discipline and instruction of our children, even if the state should seek to prosecute us for this.*

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We urgently appeal to all reasonable members of government not to go through with legislation that is patently antichristian and will make criminals of all Bible believing Christians. Let reason and good sense prevail. Please understand that God fearing, Christ following and Bible believing Christians are an asset to this country. Do not persecute them!

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Addendum: Who is the Christian Citizenship Network of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa?

The Christian Citizenship Network of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa is tasked by the Baptist Union of Southern Africa to give leadership in matters of personal and social ethics; Helping churches of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa with information on current issues, and making representation on social issues with others, and in its own name, to the relevant authorities.

The Baptist Union of Southern Africa is *a voluntary organisation comprised of more than 680 churches* and associations which prescribe to Christian tenants of belief and Baptist distinctives. The South African census of 2001 recorded that out of a population of 44,819,774 citizens *691,235 people identified themselves as Baptists* in South Africa.

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Addendum: Teaching in the Book of Proverbs concerning training of children

Concerning the discipline of children, the book of Proverbs is very down to earth.

Children are regarded neither as little angels, innocent and pure, nor as budding flowers needing only to be left along to bloom into maturity. Rather, they are regarded as wild and unruly plants, needing strong discipline to be trained in the right direction. Folly is bound up in the heart of the child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him (22:15).

The book of Proverbs displays a firm belief in the rod as an effective medicine for erring children. Parents who truly love their children will not spare the rod (13:24) for in careful and diligent discipline is their only hope. To neglect this is to become a willing party to the child's death (19:18).

To parents hesitant to administer this strong medicine comes the counsel: "Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death" (23:13, 14).

It was the failure of the priest Eli to properly discipline his erring sons that led, in time, to their death and his. But a child trained up in the right way is likely to continue in that way when he is old (22:6), growing in wisdom, and bringing peace and delight to the soul of his parents (29:15, 17).

God himself provides the perfect model in the exercise of parental discipline. For "our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:10, 11). If God takes such trouble in the discipline and training of *his* children, earthly parents should strive to do the same, for the good of their children.