

***Discipling Instead of Debating***  
A Biblical Philosophy of ADHD and ADD  
in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christian Education  
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**Establishing the Need for a Philosophy of ADHD and ADD:**

“Does the Bible speak about attention deficit disorders?” “What is your opinion of ADHD and ADD?” “How do you handle students with ADHD and ADD in your classrooms?” These and many other questions of a similar nature are asked many times throughout the course of a school year. I have found that most of these questions stem from a desire to set appropriate standards of behavior and to properly administer discipline.

**Purpose for an ADHD/ADD Philosophy Statement:**

The purpose of this philosophy statement is not to prove whether attention deficit disorders truly exist. The purpose of the following statement is to redirect the attention of parents, educators, and administrators toward the end goal of Christian education and to use that goal to direct our daily discipleship of the students who enter our schools each day.

**Defining Christian Education:**

Christian education exists to aide parents and the church in training children to make Biblically-sound choices as they interact physically, mentally, and socially with the world around them so that they in turn disciple others.

**Explaining Christian Education:**

All students need training in the organization of their thoughts, study habits, bedrooms, schedules, and lives. Students diagnosed with attention deficits disorders need even more patient training. Agreeing or disagreeing with a said diagnosis has little influence on the ultimate methods and procedures used in the classroom or home to fulfill the Great Commission in the lives of these students.

## Reviewing God's Methods:

With all the controversy over the misdiagnosing and over-medicating of American children, we educators and parents can lose sight of how best to fulfill the Great Commission in the lives of our students. Scripture lays out clear directives for anyone involved in the task of training children.

- I. *Proverbs 22:6* "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."
  - A. Training carries the idea of consistent guidance and direction mixed with hard work and sweat to reach an end goal. Think of an Olympian training from the age of six to sixteen to compete in the Olympics. All schedules-eating, school, bedtime-completely revolve around the training of this athlete. Sweat, tears, groans, pulled muscles, and broken bones are expected in the training process.
  - B. Training here speaks of much effort on the part of the trainer. In addressing discipline issues in life of a student, we need to ask ourselves a series of questions:
    1. Have I specifically taught him the correct procedure or behavior in the given situation?
    2. When I have discovered a particular weakness in a child, do I forewarn that child about a given situation in order to give him time to adjust his thinking and actions before a problem arises?
    3. Have I modeled the correct behavior to him?
    4. Have I given him grace as my Heavenly Father has given me grace? (Grace consists of a proper balance between letting natural consequences take place while taking into account the effort level and desire of the student to do right.)
  - C. Each child has a unique personality coupled with strengths and weaknesses. This means each child's way is going to look unique, however the principles and guiding directives from God's Word will apply to every child. It is the unique job of a parent and teacher to help in applying God's principles to these students' strengths and weaknesses. Another question arises from this thought.
    1. Have I taken Scripture and taught this particular student how this principle will show up in his/her specific life in a specific area of struggle?
    2. Does this child need medicine in order to establish a clear thinking pattern which will allow him/her to think through proper behaviors?

*Ephesians 6:4* "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." We need to understand our students/children well enough to know if they need extra help to reach this clear thinking pattern. Review the signs of ADHD/ADD on the website.
  - D. This verse must be viewed as the principle it is. It is not a promise. Not every child with whom we pray and work with will be willing to change.

- II. *I Corinthians 13:11 “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.”*
- A. According to Scripture there is a point at which behavior must change, where a boy becomes a man in his thinking and decision making, where a girl becomes a lady in her speech, actions, and thoughts.
  - B. We must hold students responsible for these changes from childhood to adulthood by determining childishness from foolishness.
- III. *James 4:17 “So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”*
- A. A student moves from childishness to foolishness when I have taught the correct behavior, but he chooses to not obey.
  - B. Do not be fooled by the comment “Oh, I forgot.” We, as the authority in a student’s life, must make it important to the student to remember proper behavior. Typed out lists or other techniques need to be implemented to eliminate this excuse.
- III. *Proverbs 22:15 “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.”*
- A. Folly or foolishness-This is the opposite of wisdom. Instead of using knowledge to make sound choices, knowledge is ignored or used to make bad choices.
  - B. Bound-Have you ever try to untie a knot formed by a shoelace? It takes patience, persistence, and consistency. This same effort is required as we train children to forsake folly and follow wisdom (making right choices based upon proper knowledge).
  - C. Before the rod of correction is applied, we need to make sure we have answered “yes” to the four questions listed under I. B. above.

### **Summary Statement:**

An educator’s task is four-fold:

1. to teach appropriate behaviors to each student in the classroom,
2. to know his student well enough to know if additional aides are needed (medicine) in order for the child to experience initial success and encouragement,
3. to make the step from childish thinking to adult thinking appealing and desirable, and
4. to hold the student accountable for making that step by balancing grace with natural consequences.