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Raising Children to Stay in the Faith



By Jeff and Elisabeth Barnes

Notes:

All the **bold emphasis** in quotations are mine.

Genders: The father is usually referred to in the first person. The child is, unless context implies otherwise, male to help distinguish him from his mother, for which I used a feminine gender. If gender-based roles in the traditional family offend you, proceed at your own risk. 😊

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Introduction

My daughter, Sarah, a waitress at a local restaurant, told the story of a family she was serving. There was the father, mother and four or five children. Their ages ranged from about one to eleven. They were all happy, and she never heard the children whine, beg or quarrel, including the baby. They all sat still in their seats, being attentive to each other, telling stories and having fun. They were content with their meal. By the end of the dinner, Sarah noticed that the children had not had any spills or made the usual mess. As they were leaving the restaurant, she complimented the father on his pleasant children. Then the seven year old said, very matter-of-factly and without pride, "Oh he knows that, he hears it all the time." The father laughed and nodded in agreement that what his child said was true.

This father's counsel on raising children would be worth gold. Lots of it. If a childcare professional does not have happy, obedient children, the reason is simple: he does not know how to raise them. If you want to be a good parent, you must pick your counselors carefully.

A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. - 1 Timothy 3:2-7

When my wife and I were young, idealistic parents, we were told, "Just wait, your children will rebel against your belief system soon enough." The idea being that rebellion is a natural and necessary phase in growing up.

The premise of this paper is that the Scriptures give us what we need for life and godliness; this includes raising godly, happy, obedient children. It is when you take away the Biblical foundation that rebellion becomes the norm.

For the last twenty-five years, people have been shocked at our children's behavior. We are regularly asked, "Is that really your teenage daughter? How do you get her to talk that way?" By this, they mean pleasantly and respectfully. Is it possible that teenagers could still love their parents? In September of 2009, my wife and I attended a mission conference at the church my daughters regularly attend. As we were greeted, everyone commented on our wonderful daughters, and enough asked how we raised our children that I have now decided to write it down.

If you read this with an open heart, you may learn many secrets necessary to raising godly children. I will gladly share all, so you may also learn from our mistakes.

Your Child's Environment

Children, and often adults, believe the first thing they hear. This is why it so important to control their early environment. It is far harder to remove the wrong thoughts from your child's mind than to prevent them from entering in the first place.

Home-School Your Children

While this is not possible for everyone, one of the most important things you can do to raise godly children is home school; here are eight reasons for home schooling:

1. Homeschooling helps to raise godly children

This is the reason we home schooled our children. Public educators forbid any reference to the Christian religion in their schools; at the same time, they push an atheistic worldview on our children, starting in kindergarten. This, and the peer pressure, will make it difficult for your children to confess Jesus in their public life. It is unreasonable to send a six-year old to fight spiritual battles against adults.

Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. - Matthew 10:32

My high school gave us a promiscuous sex education. I remember the lady from Planned Parenthood who said something to the effect that your parent's morality is okay for them, but you must make your own decisions for your own life. Do whatever you want as long as it doesn't hurt anybody. I forget if the woman said this before or after she put a condom on her nose. What boy would ever admit to being a virgin in a public high school?

Our amoral drug awareness education was no better; it included most recreational drugs, what they looked like, and their street names. My best friend and I learned enough in class to feel comfortable at the first party where illegal drugs were passed around. Most of the boys in my high school smoked marijuana at least occasionally; I did not know anyone who had not tried it at least once.

Public schools will teach evolution as a fact and not theory. Since evolution cannot be questioned in the class, children are no longer taught to think critically. They are taught what to think, not how to think. Evolution is an important tool used to remove God from your child's life. Jesus said:

For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? - John 5:46-47

And later, the Apostle Peter said:

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. - 2 Peter 3:5-6

Do not expect public schools to help you raise godly children when *Thou shalt not bear false witness* and *Thou shalt not steal* are banned from the classroom.

2. Homeschoolers do not surrender parental rights

"Parents give up their rights when they drop the children off at public school."

-Federal District Judge Melinda Harmon (Harmon)

The above quote is from a case where, without the parents' knowledge, Texas school officials strip-searched a child looking for signs of paddling. The Judge seems to be saying that strip-searching is acceptable behavior in public schools, and that a Biblical form of discipline is not.

He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him quickly.

- *Proverbs 13:24*

In some counties, public school officials are openly hostile toward parents. You can find countless examples of abuse by school officials; you only need to search the web if you are interested.

3. Homeschoolers receive a better education

As a young mother, my wife, Hannah, was concerned that she was not qualified to teach our children at home. After thinking about the bad influences that our children would receive in a public school, though, she was willing to try it. And it turns out that all a parent needs is commitment. Experience has shown us that anybody can give a child a better education at home than is offered in many public schools. In counseling young adults, we have learned some sad facts. For instance, it is common for someone to get a high school diploma and yet not be able to read it. One high school graduate did not even know that the body of water she lived next to her whole life is called the Pacific Ocean. Another high school graduate could not add without counting on her fingers. I myself came out of high school functionally illiterate.

In 2007, two of our children tested for the state and they both earned a 99 percentile in the national average. Even though our youngest daughter did not miss a single problem, they still only gave her a 99%. In 2009, the same children earned a 99 and 96 percentile. The one that tested at 96 took the tenth grade level even though she was in the eighth grade. The lowest score any of our children have ever received was, on one occasion, in the low eighties. While I may sound like I am obsessed with our children's GPA, I am not. It is just that a homeschooler can learn more in three hours than a public schooler will learn all day.

4. Homeschoolers receive individual attention

Just as a child cannot learn properly in a class that is going too fast for him, a bright child does not learn well in a slow class, because it is boring for him. For this reason, bright children are often labeled **ADHD**. I have heard that Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill and many other great men received poor grades in school. This should not surprise us.

When other children in the classroom misbehave, the teacher may end up spending more time babysitting than actually teaching. Homeschoolers do not sit for extended periods in a room full of distractions; parents teach their own children at a pace where the child has the best comprehension. Homeschoolers who need correction receive loving discipline; public schoolers receive Ritalin.

5. Home schooling costs a fraction of what public schooling costs

It costs from **\$8,000 to 25,000** per year, for a child in the USA to receive a public school education. A much better education at a private school costs far less. Look at our national debt and do the math; we are mortgaging our children's future.

If I told you how little we spent last year to home school our own children, we would have a social worker come to our door.

In the beginning it may seem easier to send your children off to school, yet one day the Lord will ask us if we have been faithful stewards. When he looks at us Americans, what will he think?

6. Homeschoolers avoid psychiatric screenings

You do not need to be an expert to know that questionnaires not only gather information, they also teach. As a homeschooler, your child not only avoids being medicated, he also avoids being a victim of a teacher who is practicing psychology without a license. In a free country, it is not the role of the government to decide what thoughts and emotions are normal, especially in my children.

In a public school, teachers are no longer the focus of the children's attention. They are now facilitators who wander around the room, helping one child here, and chatting with another there. They are also using the most irrational teaching methods ever devised by so-called educators: whole-language, invented spelling, the new new-math, plus sensitivity training, values clarification, transcendental meditation, cooperative learning, death ed., sex ed., suicide ed., etc. Teachers are more interested in the child's feelings, his sexuality, his family, his thoughts about death, suicide, abortion, feminism, homophobia, the environment, global warming and world citizenship than they are in teaching your child to read. *The Underground Grammarian* by Richard Mitchell is a must read on this topic.

7. Homeschooling produces socially adjusted children

When our children were little, many warned us that our children would become socially dysfunctional, if we didn't send them to a public school. However, no one who has had a conversation with one of our adult children has ever made that accusation.

Unfortunately, most public schooled children have a difficult time socially interacting outside of their peer group. Do you want your children to be able to interact comfortably with people of different ages? Not only do children segregated by age suffer from the generation gap, the segregation makes public schooled children far more vulnerable to peer pressure. It is silly to think that segregating children by age for extended periods each day gives them any advantage socially.

8. Homeschooling helps prevent teenage rebellion

Honor thy father and thy mother ... Exodus 20:12

When you notice bad grades, it is too late to remove your child from school. He has probably had bad companions for months. As a teenager, all of my bad influences came from other teenagers I met at school.

It is the year 2009, and I have seven children. Three are teenagers, four are in their twenties and all of them have always honored their father and mother. We have never had any teenager rebel. This is not an anomaly; other parents that we know, homeschoolers with the same worldview, have also missed the experience of teenage rebellion. Maybe one source of teenage rebellion is the public school system.

If you need help in starting to home school go to HSLDA, or email us at jeff@the-gospel.org.

Have a Bible Study Nightly

Have a Bible study (quiet time) for the family's devotional time. My style is to go back and forth between the Old and New Testament. In time, we will have read and studied the whole Bible. Some books (the Gospels, Proverbs) are better for the younger children, it is better to wait until the children are older for the harder books (Revelation, Leviticus).

Until our children were five or six years old, my wife read *Hurlbut's Story of the Bible*. We recommend this storybook because of its faithfulness to biblical facts. Never use storybooks that make the Bible seem like a book of fables, for instance ones that make Noah's ark seem overloaded. Never teach your children to believe fables. If you teach them to believe in Santa Clause, do not be surprised if, after they stop believing in Santa, they also stop believing in Jesus.

During our quiet times, all the issues of life are discussed, including:

Peer pressure

Before I knew the Lord, I was controlled by peer pressure. The Bible gives many warnings, and you can defuse the power of peer pressure, if you do so before a peer group controls your children.

When my oldest daughter was seventeen, some of her friends and their acquaintances came to visit. As an overprotective dad, I did not care for this, because I did not know these acquaintances. But there comes a time when you have to let your children make their own decisions, and hope that you have raised them right.

The kids had been sitting in the living room acting bored when my daughter suggested that they play a game called spoons. At this suggestion her 'friends' laughed at her in such a way as to communicate that playing spoons must be the most un-cool thing a teenager could possibly do.

In the other room, I was already thinking about damage control. I couldn't rush in, or they would humiliate her as a baby, but as soon as they left, I would need to do something. So I kept listening. The next thing I heard was my daughter laughing with them, and when the laughter started to die down, she began to explain the rules for playing spoons. Less than thirty minutes later they were all enjoying the game.

We all know the power of peer pressure to make our children conform. I hadn't prepared my daughter for this moment, yet it was in our quiet times that she had learned what she needed to counteract it. The peer pressure did not intimidate her, because it was God's opinion, not man's, which mattered.

*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
- Philippians 3:14*

Apologetics

Children should learn to defend the Bible as their final authority in the Christian faith. Along with Bible studies, sharing our faith as a family outside the home has helped with this. When an atheist asks you a hard *question*, something that your child has never thought about or always just accepted as fact, and when you answer that question, your child will hear your answers. Then he will be able to believe, not simply because his parents said it was the truth, but because he has now heard the argument presented from both sides. Later, when your child has the same hard questions put to him by a university professor, he will not be intimidated, because he will already have addressed the issue.

We were never afraid of our children losing their faith because someone asked a hard question. Rather, interacting with unbelievers in this way made our job as parenting much easier. The objections that they brought up allowed us to address these issues with our children rather than to have a skeptic address them on his own.

Hermeneutics

This is the science of interpreting the Bible. When we look at a verse that is commonly taken out of context or misinterpreted, I use it as an excuse to teach my children how to study the Scriptures. [21 Mistakes not to make while studying your Bible](#) and Camas Valley Christian Fellowship's [Inductive Bible Study](#) may be helpful resources.

Cults

Verses that are commonly used by cults are explained during our quiet time. This helps inoculate the children to cults before they knock on your door.

Boy-girl relationships

We must teach our sons to respect girls. The Bible gives you a better format to teach this than a sex education class does. And, to be blunt, we must teach our daughters to recognize that when a guy is saying, "I love you" it often means that he is trying to manipulate her into giving him sex. She must understand that, if he really loves her, he will wait for marriage. These issues come up (i.e. 2Sa 13:1 about Tamar and Amnon), and are discussed, during our Bible studies.

Everything else

Most of us understand why it is wrong to commit murder (I hope), yet children (and many adults) often do not know why it is wrong to covet their neighbors property. Many cannot explain why homosexual behavior is wrong, except that the Bible tells me so. But this will not be sufficient for your children when they attend a college or university.

Can you defend The Book of Genesis? If not, how will your children?

*Do not think that I [Jesus] will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. **But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?** - John 5:45-47*

Just yesterday, my oldest daughter started the fall semester of college. On the first day, she got an assignment to write an essay on evolution for biology. In another class, the teacher is trying to help students to separate facts from myths (the Bible is the myth). Because I taught my children myself, I do not worry that these classes will shake my daughter's faith.

The bottom line is to make sure your children can think critically. It is not enough to believe just because their religion, or their parents, says so. I was recently at a *Focus on the Family* apologetics conference for teenagers,² called the *Big Dig*. It was an excellent conference, addressing some difficult issues, but I disagreed with one speaker who said, "Parents do not freak-out when your adult children start questioning their faith". He should have said, *Parents do not wait for your children to become adults before they question their faith. Rather teach them from a young age how to test their faith.* If what you are teaching them is true, it will withstand sincere inquiry.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. - 1 John 4:1

While it's true that we should obey the Lord simply because He says so, it will be easier for your children to obey when they understand why.

Make sure that your quiet times cover every topic: sin nature and the solution, evolution, psychology and everything else that is essential for living a godly life. Also, while devotions should center around Bible studies, do not forget prayer and hymns for worship.

And that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, **thoroughly furnished** unto all good works. - 2 Timothy 3:15-17*

Pick Your Hobbies Carefully

As parents, we did not have hobbies that did not include the kids. You can take a five year old camping much more easily than you can take him golfing.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. - 1 John 2:15

In fact, most of our hobbies were mission minded. We simply looked for ways to serve God as a family. We have known other mission minded families, and these children seem to stay in the faith after they grow up.

Control Your Children's Friendships

Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him. - Proverbs 22:15

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed. - Proverbs 13:20

Put these two proverbs together, and they explain the problem perfectly.

We tried to pick our children's companions carefully, and even then, we did not allow our little children to play with other children unsupervised. One time we broke this rule when another Christian family invited us to come over for dinner. It turned out that I did not know this family as well as I thought; they allowed their children to play with Ouija boards. While we parents were only talking of Spiritual things, our children were in the other room actually trying to call up spirits! Fortunately, my oldest daughter was there and able to stop the nonsense.

Unfortunately, many children are not fit to be my children's playmates because, through their parents' failures, they have been exposed to many evil influences on the internet and on TV, etc. It is harder to remove evil thoughts than to keep them out in the first place. For instance, when I was six years old my best friend's parents allowed him to look at Playboy magazines. I will never be able to remove the image of that first centerfold from my memory.

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. - Matthew 5:28

What About Holidays?

When our children were small, our favorite 'holiday' was *Family Night*. It happened once a week, usually on Friday or Saturday. The children prepared special treats and games, and the evening ended with us all camping out on the living room floor.

Our next favorite holiday is Thanksgiving. Though we prepare the traditional feast, the day meant more. During the preceding week, we will all prepare an essay with a theme of "thanksgiving" to be read sometime during the day. We also did other things like making the neighbors cookies, treasure hunts and giving of gifts. Finally, we had a special *thanksgiving jar*; sort of like a piñata (since it was made of glass we opened it more carefully). All during the year, we filled the *thanksgiving jar* with little slips of paper, each one a memorial of an answered prayer and other things we were thankful for during the year. On Thanksgiving evening, we read, and thereby relived, the great events of the previous year. Later we put the slips of paper into an album. There were times that we had so much thankfulness our celebration lasted three days.

Our third favorite holiday is *Independence Day*. Here too, we teach our children to be thankful that we were born in the USA, and thankful that we can worship freely.

We do not celebrate Christmas or Easter. I could give many reasons, but the two most important are that Christmas is given over to covetous practices, and that teaching children to believe in Santa Clause will undermine their faith in Christ later on. If we cannot separate fact (the resurrection of Christ) from fiction (Santa visiting every house on Christmas), how can we expect our children to?

While we do not celebrate these holidays, we do not isolate ourselves from family during this time. We visit the relatives, and they can give our children gifts, if they wish. While we tried to explain to relatives which toys were offensive, sometimes they would ignore us. Occasionally, we would have to redeem an offensive toy. To redeem means that we would explain to our child, in private, why we could not keep the offending toy, and then we would go to the store and find an acceptable toy of similar value. We do not give offensive toys away; we throw them away.

We never celebrate Halloween; we do not redeem Halloween; we would not allow our children to go to *Harvest festivals*, if they were imitations of, or alternatives to, Halloween.

Neither give place to the devil. - Ephesians 4:27

The reason I mention holidays, is that they are a good way to bond with your children, when celebrated in a healthy way.

Your Worldview

Is Your Teenager a Big Kid or Young Adult?

In many cultures, motherhood starts at fourteen years old. Jews used to celebrate a boy becoming a man at the age of thirteen with a Bar Mitzvah. Many still celebrate Bar Mitzvahs today; however do they believe that their teenager is a man? Do you treat you adolescent like a big kid or young adult? How you answer depends on your worldview. Your worldview will also dictate how you train up your child.

Is Rebellion Normal?

Two different worldviews predominate in the USA. One view says that toddlers go through a normal phase called *The Terrible Twos*, and that teenage rebellion is a normal part of growing up. The other worldview sees these phases as a product of defective child rearing, and nothing more.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. - 1 John 2:15

When we first started raising children, we were going it alone. I knew of no one who held beliefs similar to what you are reading here. My oldest child was eleven years old when *To Train up a Child* by Michael and Debi Pearl came into print. We read their book shortly after it came out, and found it refreshing to see someone else teaching the same truths from the Bible, completely separate from us.¹



What are the Objects of Our Children's Attention?

As we look at our world, there is a trend that must be addressed. There are over twice as many women on mission field as there are men.³ Similarly, there are more women than men in our colleges and universities.⁴

Does this imply that our young men are without direction? What are we doing differently with our boys than with our girls? Or do we just blame it on testosterone? Perhaps we succeed with girls because we raise them to be mothers, which is their God given roll.

However, boys are raised to play with fire trucks, hunt and drive motorcycles (the center of their existence focuses on play). They are not raised to be fathers. I am still developing this thought. If anyone has any other thoughts on this, I would like to hear them.

The Home as the Center

That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. - Titus 2:4-5

In many families today, the parents spend less than fifteen minutes a day communicating with their teenagers. Not so in our home. Our home is the center of our world. My wife gave birth to our children at home; we attend a home church (we also attend more traditional churches); for many years I ran my business from the house; we home school our children; and finally, any child who disobeys is buried in the backyard (jk 😊).

Even if it is not possible to do everything from the house, why not do what you can? If others raise your children (i.e: public school, summer camp, after-school sports, youth groups), do not be surprised when they impart their values to your child.

Actively Unspoil Your Children

Before I begin, let me say that I personally do not have much use for self-esteem. It sounds like a fancy name for pride. Have you ever seen a mother trying to get her youngster to stop misbehaving by telling him what a good child he is? This is nothing but confusion; if he is really good, why should he stop misbehaving? Self-esteem, if it is important, comes from being a vital part of the family. Children who take on tasks, lifting the workload from mom, know that they are important. Dad's comment on a great dinner or desert will bring real joy to Mother's helper. A stranger coming up to you in public and telling you what great kids you have will do far more for your children's self-esteem than all the flattery in the world.

Another idea is to let your older children to help Mommy raise the younger ones. If the older child's help is necessary, that makes the new arrival his baby too, and he will not feel jealous for Mom's attention. However, children should be treated more equally as they grow up. The younger children may resent the older ones, if they're allowed to be bossy. This 'one up one down' relationship may hinder the children bonding closely as brothers and sisters when they are older.

To have happy children you do not need to spoil them. They do not need an allowance, designer clothing, iPods, or any other thing that advertisers tell them they need.

And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. - Luke 12:15

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. - 1 John 2:15

If you do want spoiled children, always give them their own way. If you want unspoiled children, though you play games appropriate for their age, never lose games on purpose. When they lose, it gives them a chance to build character and learn good sportsmanship. When your child does beat you at his first game of checkers, it will be a great day, forever in his memory. In the same way, do not always ask your children what they want for dinner; ask them what they think Daddy wants for dinner. Do not always ask them what they want to do; ask them, "What can we do for Mommy?" Keep them unspoiled when they are young, and you will have delightful teenagers.

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it. - Proverbs 22:6

Teach Your Children Unfairness

Thou shalt not covet ... any thing that is thy neighbor's. - Exodus 20:17

The world is not fair. If we love our children, we will teach them that they can be happy in spite of unfairness. In fact, we have a lot to be thankful for even with unfairness. If the world were fair, our standard of living would be much lower. Since every communist country in history tries to practice fairness, and they all suffered from poverty, you can use them as examples.

While we are on the subject of communism, your individual children should have sole ownership of their own toys (you may need to divide their communally owned toys). Do not force children to share their toys. If a child owns his toys, he will take better care of them. This will also end all fights. You no longer need guess:

- Who was playing with the toy first
- Why the child is being selfish
- Whose selfishness caused the fight
- Who did not put the toys away

Children are not really learning to share when you force them to do so. If you force them, they may share in order to avoid punishment; however, this may also cause them to nurture a resentful spirit. If you are always forcing your child to share with a sibling, they may eventually come to resent that sibling. When children are tired of playing alone, they will share their toys to entice their siblings to play with them. When they share from their own free will, they will have the joy that comes from giving freely. Put yourself in your child's place. How would you like it if Uncle Sam forced you to share all of your toys?

For this same reason, never force children to play together. If you force a child to play with his sibling, he will play with a resentful spirit. The unwanted child will respond by gloating and testing the limits of being undesirable; he already has your authority to force his will on the others. Instead of forcing children to play together, spend time with the neglected child, training him to become a desirable playmate. As for the other child who wants to be alone, few children prefer to play alone when other children are fun to play with.

We have made two exceptions to this rule. First, we occasionally ask one of our children to take an undesirable child and play with him, explaining that we understand the sacrifice, but it is a way they can serve Jesus. Second, in the case where a child's friend would try to divide playmates to get all the attention, it would be him and not the rejected child whom we would separate.

Our rule on fairness also goes for treats. I taught my kids that if I could only give out treats when there are enough to go around, I would give out far fewer treats. When I had one treat (not enough to go around) I expected my other kids to be happy for the child who got the treat. If a neglected child started to pout, I pointed out to him that I might have to be less generous in the future, since my generosity was apparently causing him to be discontent. Ask a child who is always complaining why he only notices when his portion is small, and why, if he really wanted fairness, never points out discrepancies when his portion is the larger one.

Protective Parents

Have you ever been accused of overprotecting your children? In our culture, that is a compliment. That is what God made parents for. The trick is to have your children capable and willing to protect their own selves by the time they arrive at adulthood. To do this, always protect your children, but don't try to shelter them from the world as they grow older.

To be more specific, when children are five years old, they should live in a bubble. They do not need to know about the world's problems, since they cannot solve issues like abortion anyway. Rather, at a young age, they should be exploring the wonders of God's world; things like the magic and the beauty of a

butterfly. Then, gradually, as your toddler becomes an adult, address all the difficult issues that he will need to know, in order to protect himself when the time comes.

Whether or not you prepare your kids to face the real world, they are going to be exposed at some point. You can try to prevent that day from coming, but the wiser parent will avoid disaster by preparing his children for it.

To prepare your children you will need to give them more than head knowledge; you must also create opportunities where they can learn how to exercise control over their own hearts. For instance, my children helped me to decide which movies and books were inappropriate for us to watch. I also allow them to hold me accountable. By the time they have become young adults, they should be capable of being accountable on their own.

Another way to bring your children out of their bubble is to involve yourself in some ministry that they can join. They will then be able to see the world, first hand, while still in a safe environment.

I [Jesus] pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. - John 17:15

Television

We do not allow commercial TV (programming with commercials every few minutes) in our home, nor do we allow cable or satellite TV. Some may argue that there are some good programs on TV; even if this is true, the commercials and other programs following will outweigh their value. If you do not know how offensive commercial TV really is, stop watching commercial TV for about three months (if you can, ha-ha!). After this fast, just start clicking through the channels and you'll be amazed. TV watching is addictive, and some children are glued to it for over six hours every day. The bad influence will always far outweigh the good, in such cases.

We do allow DVDs and VHS movies in the home. Obviously, we try to pick educational or moral movies. Some of the original Walt Disney movies fell into that category. After watching Cinderella, I would praise her for returning good for evil, and watching Dumbo, I would praise his mouse friend for his faithfulness in the hard times. Nevertheless, many of the Walt Disney movies made today are not fit for children, and therefore we would not allow young children to watch them.

Sometimes we don't realize that a movie's morals fall below our standards until we're already watching it. In those cases, we stop the movie in the middle (we may redeem it later). We always talk about the video's message afterwards. Was the hero in the movie an adulterer? Did we ever laugh at the calamity of an innocent person? I don't mind when a story line has a wicked bad guy (such as Haman in the book of Esther), but I don't want my children's heroes to be good guys with bad morals.

When a person relaxes in front of the TV or a movie, his thinking becomes passive. The word amuse comes from two words: *not* and *think*. When we are amusing ourselves, we are doing just that: not thinking. With the TV turned on and the brain turned off, many false premises can sneak past the critical thinking part of the brain. Couple this with the fact that every director of every movie has a philosophy with which he is trying to influence your children. As a parent you cannot relax, you must stop a movie right in the middle and discuss the false premises when they arise. If this seems like too much work, do not watch movies at all.

Reading

Instead of commercial TV, we read to our children (my wife is the main reader) in the evenings. We read spiritual books as well as the classics, or anything that came with a good recommendation. When a book occasionally did contradict what we had been teaching our children, we were right there to discuss and correct it.

Radio

Though the radio is obsolete, we apply the same principles to our music that we do to the TV. A good way to set your standard of music is to listen to the lyrics without the music. If the song idolizes a lifestyle that you don't want your children to emulate, or if you would be ashamed to sing it in front of Jesus, it shouldn't be allowed in your house.

Along with the TV and internet, personal music devices are addictive. If a child is becoming preoccupied with his music, it is time to set limits. In the same way, we occasionally limited headphone use, when one of our children began isolating himself with them. We did this because we have seen, in ministry, adults who can't function without background noise.

*For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.
- Isaiah 30:15*

Internet

Little children do not need the internet. Older children should understand that the internet is addictive before they are allowed to use it, and should still have time limits when they do. At first, my children were only allowed to have an email address; I automatically get a copy in my in box of anything that is sent to my minor children. I trust my children; it's the spammers and predators that I don't trust.

Internet filters may help, but they are not perfect and until they are, depending on them is dangerous. I believe that I could get some filth past most filters (if I wanted to). And today, most children are more computer savvy than me. It is okay to be over protective. When you are establishing any policy, remember that it is far easier to prevent your child's mind from being filled with garbage than it is to try to get the dirty thoughts out later.

Do not Forbid, Teach

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen. - Matthew 6:13

The following *thou shalt*s are not exact science, but rather standards we used, which were designed to teach our children to think.

When my children were little, I forbade chewing bubble gum in the house (by the way, now gum is one of their favorite candies). However, I did allow matches, smoking, playing with guns, and haircuts of any type. This may seem arbitrary, so let's look at these things more closely.

Matches

My parents forbade my brothers and me to play with matches. Therefore, we hid in closets and other dumb places while we transgressed. There were several times when we nearly burnt the house down. Fire seemed to have an irresistible pull that we could not resist. With these memories in mind, I never arbitrarily asked my children not to play with matches. Instead, I taught them how to play with matches safely, and then told them where they were allowed to do so - in the middle of the driveway.

Another advantage for us is that for ten years we have heated with a woodstove; it is a comfort to know that my children are always safe around fire.

Guns

One time my younger brother found a pistol in the creek behind our parent's house. He showed it to me; we cleaned out the mud and proceeded to shoot it. The bullets still worked!

I taught my children gun safety from an early age. My fear was that, even with all the other controls, one of their friends might show them a gun or want them to play with one. In such a situation, my children are far safer than the one who is simply forbidden (as Pandora was with her fatal box) to touch a weapon. For instance, my children will run to tell an adult if their friend is playing with a gun. Remember that gun safety, like CPR, is an ongoing class; we must review to keep ourselves proficient.

Also, for the above reasons toy guns are dangerous. If children are allowed to play with toy guns and you do not teach gun safety, they are learning bad habits. If you allow toy guns, at least, use them to teach gun safety; do not allow them to point one at a person, they must keep their finger off the trigger until ready to shoot, *pretend* the gun is always loaded (like you should do with a real gun), etc.

Smoking

None of my seven children ever smoked while growing up, even though it never was forbidden. It may be because I told them the story of my addiction before I was a Christian. Instead of forbidding smoking, I taught them about smoking. I do not recommend the same unprincipled education that I got in my public school; there they taught us how to use drugs and told us all their street names, hoping that with all this amoral knowledge we could make the right decision for ourselves. The way I educated my children was very different. We would try to find a smoker among our acquaintances who was not addicted (we never found one), then we would try to find a smoker who was glad to be one (again, un-findable). When your children see that those who make smoking seem glamorous are the ones selling the cigarettes, while those who smoke regret it, it removes most of the temptation. Another comment one of my daughters made was that doing a cost analysis was another demotivator, so have your children do the math with you, "If you smoke one pack of cigarettes a day, how much will that add up to in a year? What else could you do with that money?"

Haircuts

I saw a comic strip once:

Panel 1 - two girls are walking together, girl 1 with a fresh Mohawk.

Panel 2 - Girl 2 asks girl 1 if the new haircut shocked her mother. Girl 1 replies that it didn't, her mother was cool and, in fact, liked the haircut.

Panel 3 - Girl 2, "Then why did you do it?"

I allowed any type of haircut, and once, at seventeen, my son James did test this liberty with an indescribable haircut (you would need to see a picture). About two weeks after James cut his hair, I went

down to visit my mother. My son surprised us by arriving at her house a few days later. When he got out of the car, I noticed that he had replaced his extravagant (for lack of a better word) hairstyle with a crew cut. For some reason I was momentarily disappointed. Maybe, even at fifty, I wanted to shock my parents, too, and to do so I needed to live vicariously through my son.

Pierced ears

Since pierced ears are more permanent than haircuts, I did set a minimum age limit and required a waiting period for the older children. When a child would ask me for permission, I simply told her to wait two months and if she still wanted her ears pierced after thinking about it for a while, to come back and ask for them then.

I think that, by strictly forbidding piercings and haircuts, a parent places an unnecessary, and often unscriptural, stumbling block in front of his child. Your child will have enough struggles without that.

If your child (or young adult) does get a piercing (haircut, make up, a pair of pants, etc.), will she, because she didn't follow your standard, feel as if she's lost her salvation? If she does, she may be tempted to throw the baby out with the bath water. At that point, piercings would be the least of your worries.

Parties

I did not forbid parties. Rather, long before my children were teenagers, I started preparing them for their first party by giving them this advice:

"Stay sober for your first party. Watch the others, and if your friends look like they are having fun when they're drunk, if they enjoy hucking in the toilet, or if, when they're bragging the next morning about how stoned they were, you remember that having been fun, then you can always get drunk at the next party. But, if you get drunk at your first party, you will never be able to decide whether or not this is the lifestyle you really want."

It may also be necessary to warn your daughter not to let her beverage glass out of her sight! The drugging of girls at parties is now a common way to rape.

Though I never forbade them, none of my children ever attended a party where alcohol was served, excepting formal events (like weddings). The only exception was when one of my daughters, at fifteen, went to what she thought was a friendly gathering, but turned out to be a party where alcohol was served. I'm glad that she took my advice.

Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.

Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again. - Proverbs 23:29-35

This advice has kept my children far better than my parents prohibitions kept me.

Don't lie to your children about the negative side effects of drinking and drugs. My siblings and I were given scare tactics to keep us from smoking marijuana, but when our friends still seemed normal after smoking, we tended to ignore all prophecies of doom.

We are not libertarian

Do not assume from the previous paragraphs that we allowed our children to do anything they wanted to do. We are not libertarian, it just that I am not interested in letting our culture decide what is right and wrong for my children. For instance, in our culture it is wrong to smoke and permissible to fornicate, whereas before the 1950s it was fine to smoke, but fornicating was the sin. Today young Christians often let culture, rather than the Bible, dictate their behavior. Therefore, today, while they may not smoke they fornicate.¹⁰

But you are not of the world, therefore do not let culture decide for you what is right and wrong; use the Bible. When I did forbid something, my children saw that it was not arbitrary (except the chewing gum). They knew that the only reason that I made rules for them was for their welfare and, of course, to please God.

*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.
- Romans 12:2*

Church Influence

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. - Colossians 2:8

As Christians, we know to be on guard against the world's philosophies. However, we must also beware of dangerous counsel in the church. While dangerous counsel may not be common, it is more common than kidnapping and yet what parent does not protect against that? It is because of the extreme value of our children, that we are extremely careful. Bottom line; do not delegate the responsibility of your Child's spiritual growth to anybody.

Since children believe the first thing they hear, it only takes one bad experience to do near irreparable damage. To change the subject for a moment, have you ever tried to show a cult member how they misinterpret the scripture? It is nearly impossible, yet if we had shown these same people the scriptures and how the cult will twist them, you could have easily reached them before they joined. It is in this same way that it is easier to guide your children down the narrow path than to get them back on the narrow path after they have strayed on to the broad one. This problem, trying to undue damage from ungodly influence is the basis of the following advice.

No Sunday School

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. - Deuteronomy 6:6-7

At any age, a properly trained child should be able to sit quietly beside you in the pew, during church. God commands a father, not the Sunday school teacher, to teach his children. The leaven of psychology has permeated our churches, and many pastors and elders are not even aware of it. You do not want a Sunday school teacher contradicting or undermining what you teach your children at home.

When you consider that 70-75 percent of Christian youth are leaving the faith shortly after leaving high school,⁷ and that, according to reporternews.com, "When the statistics on teen sexuality are controlled for social and economic factors, conservative Protestant teens first have sex at about the same time as their peers -- the average is midway through their 16th year." it is safe to assume that Sunday schools are not effective. Consider carefully whether or not God wants you to give your children better odds.

No Bible Camps

I do not disparage Bible camps, most of my children have been counselors at one time or another. However, I would not send younger children to one either. Why not? Because parents who will not take the time to raise their children properly also send their children to camp, (expecting teenage counselors to do their job for them). These kids, through no fault of their own, will be bad companions. It is normal to see hypocrites in the world; these are useful for bad examples. Yet when children go off to camp, if they have a bad experience with a with dysfunctional peer pressure, the damage may be permanent. The damage may be even worse if your children run into a dysfunctional counselor.

No Baby Sitters

Our older children were capable of running the house when we were gone. Of course, the length of time you can spend away from home depends on their ages, abilities and other circumstances. While your children are toddlers, be very careful with whom you leave them.

Marriage

University of Alberta sociologist Dr. Lisa Stroschein, in a study appearing in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, found that children with divorced parents are nearly twice as likely to be prescribed Ritalin compared to children whose parents remain together.⁸

To raise children properly, it is best to have two parents. The father is more of a disciplinarian, and the mother provides unconditional love. You can see the difference between a mother and father when their child falls and skins his knee on the playground. If the father is there, the child will try to be brave. If the mother is watching him, the child will enjoy a good cry. Children need to learn both love and courage.

For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. - Ephesians 5:23-24

Wives must understand that Christ made their husbands to be the head. They are not to listen to any counsel from a pastor or a friend that teaches rebellion to her husband. My wife being openly thankful for her husband naturally made our children thankful also.

Husbands love your wives. Teach your sons by example how to respect women. Love between spouses creates harmony in the household. It will be easier to teach your children to honor their mother when they see that you love your wife.

Fathers, you must demand that your children respect their mother. We all want children to respect and obey us from their heart, but do not expect this to happen unless you teach them to do so.

If either of the parents does not understand God's order of authority, they will have a much harder time in their marriage, and a much harder time raising happy, obedient children. This is the point: if your marriage is dysfunctional, don't be surprised if your children are also.

I know that what I am saying sounds hard on single parents, and on parents with unbelieving spouses. Actually, my heart pours out to the single parent. While you may not have a spouse, or be able to change the spouse you have, still with God's help you can do what He expects of *you*.

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.
- 1 Corinthians 7:14

My wife and I both struggle with being good spouses, because we both come from broken homes. We understand human nature. But no matter how frustrated you may be, do not criticize your spouse to (or in front of) your children. This makes it impossible for them to honor both of their parents, and difficult for them to respect the critical spouse.

*And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and **let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.*** - Malachi 2:15

I do not lie to my children about my past; though I do not go into every detail, what I do tell them is honest. My daughters know that I was just the sort of young man that I am now trying to protect them from. They also know that if Christ had not saved their mother and me, according to statistics, our marriage would have failed, and they themselves would have grown up very differently. Even so, we try to share about our marriage in a positive way by giving the glory for our successes to God.

Discipline

Start in Infancy

Babies really are very smart. Any one-year-old can learn a language without effort, simply by being in the same house with other speakers; show me an adult who can do that. Because of their exceptional ability to learn, they are never too young to start training.

By the time my oldest daughter was one year old, she was in the habit of screaming for her dinner. It was not that she was always screaming; it was just that my wife could not start eating her own dinner until she was done shoveling food into our baby. When I finally noticed this habit, it was deeply entrenched; nevertheless, that night I made up my mind to cure her. I would not feed her while she was throwing a tantrum. It was a long evening; my wife thought I was ruining her baby but, bless her, she did not interfere. The next night started out the same way. For the first few minutes, our baby's tantrums were fierce. If my

daughter had kept up screaming for only one more minute, she would have won (I was actually at the point of surrendering to the stronger will), and this paper may never have been written. But then suddenly, as fast as the storm had come, it was over. My daughter stopped crying. From that very moment on, my daughter has always been a pleasant companion at the dinner table. The benefit continues to this day.

It was not because my daughter was a slow learner that it took her two days to stop throwing a tantrum; it was only because she was unwilling to surrender her control at the dinner table that it took so long. This event also opened my wife's eyes, and she saw that training was possible, and the results delightful. We should have started teaching table manners sooner.

Obviously if your baby is hungry, tired, cold, hurt, frightened, etc., he needs your attention. But if all of the baby's needs are met, a mother should be able to set it down without it throwing a tantrum. Not only will this make the mother's day pleasanter, it also:

- Is safer to put the baby down when Mom needs both hands to cook.
- Other housekeeping chores go much faster, giving her more quality time to train the baby.
- Is tiring enough being a good mom without always having to carry a baby around 24/7. If we expect Mother to keep up her spirits, she will need moments of rest.
- Other siblings also need attention. It will be difficult to teach them by example when Mother is always haggard.

Instead of training, many parents give their babies a pacifier to make them stop crying (later some of these parents will send their babies to nursery school). By doing so, they are wasting important opportunities to train. I believe there is a connection between using a pacifier to plug the mouth of a crying baby, and an adult who has never learned to control his eating habits. If your baby is crying:

- Because he has a dirty diaper, change it.
- Because he is hungry, feed him.
- Because he is cold, put some clothes on him.
- Because he is tired, put him to bed.
- Because he has bumped himself, console him.
- Because he is trying to control you, train him.

If the baby is crying to control you, this is an opportunity for him to grow. Do not do him the disservice of giving him a pacifier. The bottom line is this: in the first year, you must discern the difference between a baby crying for a legitimate need, and one who is only throwing a tantrum, then reward the behavior that you desire. This means that, if you enjoy seeing your baby throw tantrums, you ought to reward the tantrum by cuddling the baby (or giving him a pacifier). Nevertheless, in my opinion, children who have been taught to throw temper tantrums are far less happy than their un-trained counterparts. And, in my experience, the parents are too.

Sometimes Christian leaders put too much stress on teaching that children are born in sin. My children were not always trying to find evil things to do. Often a child will want to please his parents, but won't know how to. By giving him boundaries in infancy, he will soon have discernment to know how to please (and displease) you. Not only this, boundaries will give him security. He will know that his mother is watching over him, and he will feel safe when he is inside the boundary. Compare this to the security an infant feels when his mother is always stressed, angry, screeching and pulling her hair out by the roots.

Do not wait until your child is too big to control, before you begin training him. It is far easier to administer corporal punishment to a toddler than to undo fifteen-year-old bad habits in an adolescent.

Teach Honesty

Honesty has always been a top priority in our child rearing goals. Now, after having successfully raised honest children for over twenty-six years, we can say, without reserve, that our method truly works!

When our children were young, I sat them down and explained to them this rule: if they did something wrong and voluntarily confessed it to their mother or to me, we would not punish them. They could always trust us to keep this promise of complete amnesty, if they were honest.

Thus, from a very young age our children developed a habit of coming to us as soon as they had done anything wrong. This worked better than what we had hoped; as time went on our children learned honesty so well that as soon as one of them did anything disobedient, all the others would coach him to make a confession right away. I can remember times when they could not wait for me to get home from work, and as I drove up, they would run for the car, not even waiting for me to come inside.

The best part is that if they can learn accountability for their actions while they are young, it will be a pattern engrained into them when they grow older. Even though skeptics have found it hard to believe, our children never abused the privilege of amnesty. Knowing that they would have to give a truthful answer (which has a dread all of its own) has actually kept them from temptation and wrongdoing. This, like the grace of Jesus Christ, discouraged them from sin.

Oftentimes there were things that we needed to explain after they confessed. For example, when one daughter hit a baseball through a window, we looked for another place to play baseball. However, there should be no lectures (telling them what they already know), no anger and no punishment.

Once, when my son James was twelve years old, his chore for the day was to change the oil in our truck. After I gave him some instructions, I left him on his own. Later he moved the axle-stand from under the axle, but he forgot to remove it from underneath the truck before he lowered it. When he saw the damage he had done by lowering the truck onto the axle-stand, he ran into the house in anguish. Instead of helping, he had ruined the truck.

My wife saw his inner turmoil, but even before she could speak his sister was there telling him not to worry. "Just tell Dad the truth and everything will be okay!" I was told later how it seemed like an eternity as James built up the courage to come and tell me. Finally, in tears, he confessed to me what he had done. I met him with a smile. Actually, I think I laughed with relief. The way he looked, I thought something bad had happened, when really I had an honest son who was trying to help fix the car. The incident was an accident, and not rebellious behavior. We went out together and looked at what turned out to be only minor damage to the truck.

An important side note: never ask your child to confess to a trespass, if you already know he is the culprit and are determined to punish him for what he's done. In addition, never punish a child for a crime, if you have any doubt of the child's guilt.

One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established. - Deuteronomy 19:15

Sometimes a little cherub will lie. As a child, I myself was smooth and hard to catch. Not until I was twenty-one and gave my life to the Lord did I find a cure.

My advice for a child who cannot stop lying:

1. Sit him down and show him Bible verses on how God hates lying.
2. Explain that all sin is addictive, and the longer one continues to lie, the harder it will be for him to stop.
3. Show him how he is deceiving his own self; how in the future, his lying behavior will close doors of opportunity for him. Do this by telling him true stories of how lies have closed doors for other people (perhaps even of yourself).
4. Remove all privileges that require trust, and explain why. Later in life, when the doors of opportunity mentioned earlier close on him, no one will explain why. He can only learn this if you teach him as a child.
5. In any dispute between him and his siblings, explain that you are not interested in listening to his version of the events, because you can't trust him to tell the truth.
6. Never ask him a question that would give him an opportunity to lie. Instead, only ask questions when you can verify the answers.
7. If you are not sure whether he is lying, do not punish him. However, tell him that you believe he is lying (if that's true), and that when you find out for sure, he will receive a spanking hard enough to make up for all the times he has gotten away with it.
8. Spank him every time you catch him lying. These are the hardest spankings a child should need in his life.

*Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.
- Proverbs 23:13-14*

If you apply the above measures consistently, your child will not be motivated to lie. When your child stops lying, don't remind him of the past or hold it over his head.

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. - Psalms 103:12

Our rule, not to punish our children when they tell the truth, was to help instill honesty in our children; since then, we have seen other benefits come out of it as well. For example, it solved the problem of tattle telling.

Instead of the kids running to tell on their siblings' shortcomings, they tell their siblings to make a confession instead. On the outside, this may seem to be the same thing, but their motives are opposite. A tattler's motive is to get a sibling in trouble, whereas motivating a sibling to confess, is helping him to keep out of trouble. The only time we desired (or allowed) one sibling tell on another is when the culprit was doing something dangerous or destructive AND when the culprit did not stop after the other had already warned him.

Another benefit of our children's honesty is that we have been able to leave money and other valuables around the house. If some object of value has ever been missing, it was simply misplaced. We know this, because missing objects have always eventually been found.

The biggest benefit of all, of course, is the spiritual lesson they are learning. Often, the way children deal with their parents will be the way they learn to deal with God. Jesus said, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God set up this pattern for us, to deliver us from sin. If they can learn when they are young that confession is a natural course in life, how much easier it will be for them when they face God in the future!

Be a Parent

If God had wanted one to parent as a friend, He could have given babies to toddlers. But He didn't. He gives babies to adults and he gives adolescent children to older adults. You are your child's parent, not his friend. Parents who put their child's friendship before their responsibility as parents, in order to be close to their children, seldom succeed in being close or in raising happy obedient children. On the other hand, if you do your job as God commands, you and your children will become close friends after all, as I and my children are.

Many parents are afraid that, if they discipline, their children will not like them. When your children obey you cheerfully and you are able to lead them cheerfully, your relationship will blossom. What child wants a parent who is always yelling at them for a friend?

At the risk of sounding like a psychologist, http://127.0.0.1/stdy_fmly/parenting.php?pass=pdf - _edn3 parents, usually the wife, must watch out for the gratification of being needed. Do we serve our children for the pleasure it gives us? Or for their benefit, even at the expense of our feelings?

Do you find alternatives to spanking your child because it is in their best interest, or because spanking your child causes you pain?

With the same premise, do you pick up after your children because it is in their best interest, or because you want their thankful response?

Later in life, will you bail your child out of trouble, time and time again? And, when you do, will you do it because it is in his best interest, or because you feel that he needs you?

Will you justify the support you give your thirty-five year old son, while he sits at home playing video games all morning?

The apostle Paul gave the raising of obedient children as one of the qualifications for being a church leader (1st Timothy 3:4-5, 12). If a man will not deny his own feelings for the sake of his children, he will not be capable of guiding the church with the right motives either.

[Let One that wants the office of Bishop] ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) - 1 Timothy 3:4-5

If you are familiar with the idea of codependency, you will probably recognize some of the bullet points above. However, those who believe in codependency are mistaken in their theory.

Codependency says that, in these cases, the mother loves her child too much. The truth is that she really loves herself far more than she loves her child.

It's like when a man who first falls in love, mistaking the feeling his darling gives him for love. If he really loves his sweetheart, he will care about her feelings without confusing them with his own desires.

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. - John 15:12-13

Though our children give us pleasure, they are not here *for* our pleasure. This is a strange paradox, but we must accept it, like many other spiritual truths.

He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. - John 12:25

Corporal Punishment

The Bible admonishes to us spank our children, because corporal punishment is the most important thing in child rearing. I believe that it is because the Bible so strongly recommends corporal punishment that most experts condemn it. Summing up the world's opinion, Lee Ann Slaton, leader of parenting classes at *Parent's Place*, states:

"It teaches a child, if you're bigger you can hit. Violence begets violence.. and they're not learning." (CBS Broadcasting Inc, 2007)

As a leader of *Parent's Place*, Ms. Slaton may be passionate in her beliefs, but she is ignorant. Other studies go beyond ignorance, and are downright dishonest:

"In general, spanking can lead to emotional and behavioral problems, increased aggression, and use of violence to solve problems. Although many adults were spanked as children and do not view any negative consequences in their own lives attributed to spanking, it may be different for their children. Non-physical punishments take more work from parents but are also healthier options for the children. (Meek, 2007)

Without ever having met the person who wrote this article, I am willing to bet five thousand dollars that not only is my worst behaved child better behaved than his/her best-behaved child. My most discontent child is happier and more content than his/her most well adjusted child. If any of you readers believe that gambling is a sin, this is not a gamble. 😊

To be fair, not every single psychiatrist opposes corporal punishment. Occasionally a brave man stands up against the crowd. Consider the following post from PsychCentral's website:

On February 27, 2007 at 6:39 pm, SL-PH.D. replied:

The problem with a lot of the literature on spanking, and **I have looked at most of it**, is that it:

Assumes that all pain = EVIL This is a BIG presupposition!

All or most articles done in context of a parent experiencing a form of explosive anger.

All or most articles done in the context of parent either going "too far" or "too little" but ignoring fact that child was not "broken" in oppositional will challenging rules and parents.

Ignores all those parents that spank calmly, quickly, and consistently. Something most parents do not do and which the articles never report on.

Ignores that unless a child's willful rebellion is not broken, any spanking does not work but causes damage in creating a) a permissive child and/or b) a "monster-brat. Which instruction, at early ages does nothing to correct.

Ignores those many parents that once they get a child to breaking point, stop, and then comfort child, affirming that child with love until child feels secure, protected, and loved. [bold emphasis is mine] (Meek, 2007)

Every one of this doctor's observations are important enough to read again. While many doctors give some wiggle room, a post like this from the psychiatric community is rare. After all, why correct children when you can medicate them?

As you read studies on spanking, you will notice that many experts cannot tell the difference between a man who comes home drunk and angry and puts welts on his child, and a sober father who, in love, corrects his child with a spanking. If you cannot tell the difference, for your child's sake, keep your hands off him.

Never spank your child in anger. You will never come to the end of your rope if you spank early. The parents who discipline their child when they've finally lost their temper, are the ones who create these statistic when their child ends up in the hospital.

Never shake your baby as an alternative to spanking. This is very dangerous, and many children are hospitalized with neck injuries, some of whom will die. Also, never yank a small baby into your arms. Often a parent, at the end of his rope, will dislocate a shoulder or an elbow by jerking.

Some critics have mistakenly argued that a child cannot love and fear his parents at the same time. If you believe this, you need to do a Bible study on the *fear of God*.

*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: **but rather fear him** which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. - Matthew 10:28*

While many Christian leaders who advocate corporal punishment recommend the rod (or a switch), I recommend using your hand. When I spank using my hand, I can feel what I am doing, so I know that I am leaving a sting. I also know that I will never leave a welt.

I suppose it needs to be said that there is a difference between training your child in the direction he should go and correcting rebellious behavior. When you are training, or directing, you need only a little swat, just enough to give your child the message. When correcting a child who is testing you, he will need more sting.

How much? This depends on the child. Some need only a little swat, but if you have to keep correcting him, you need to begin to apply more sting.

Again, this should be obvious, but relatively speaking, you can just flick an infant, though it will become necessary to increase the sting, as the child grows older. If you start young, you will have to spank less hard and less often.

To protect your child's dignity, and to protect them from dishonest Social Workers, spank in private. The object is not to humiliate them, but to train them.

It may seem like I have an excessive passion for corporal punishment. In reality, when you apply spankings consistently and properly, they will seldom need to be applied. In fact, half of my children, when recently questioned, do not even remember ever having been spanked by me.

Demand Obedience

A successful parent expects and receives cheerful obedience the first time he gives his child a command. How much happier would your children be, if all the nagging and yelling were to suddenly stop?

Here are some guidelines:

- Because children are often lost in their own world, say your child's name before you give your command. Do not say "Pick up your toys, Sarah." Instead say, "Sarah, pick up your toys."
- While you should not yell, make sure that you are loud enough for your child to hear you the first time. Do not give commands from across the house. When you are calling for your children, do not let them yell "what?" from across the house either.
- Make sure you have clearly stated your command, so that your child can plainly understand it.
- Give the command one time, and in a cheerful voice.
- Never count to three, or to any other number. This does not teach him to come, but to defy you. If he is old enough to count, he is old enough to obey immediately.

All of these points are important. Give the child's name first, speak loud enough for the child to hear, make sure it was a clear command, cheerfully say the command once, and then punish disobedience (this includes a sulky, slow or disrespectful response) with swift and consistent discipline.

Children (and dogs) understand tonal language before they understand words. If you don't believe me, go out and command any trained dog to *spit* and see what happens. A parent will often ask his child to come at 24 decibels. Then, when the child ignores him, he will then shout to his child, at 50 decibels, to come. When the child still ignores him, he will finally, in a 124-decibel rage, scream for his child to come. Not understanding what tonal language is, many parents have successfully trained their children to obey only when they are yelled at in an angry *tone*.

For your child's safety, before your child learns to walk he can learn to come at your command. One of our children was slow at learning to come. Since the problem was not rebellion, punishment was not the answer. Our solution was to make a game out of obedience. My wife was at one end of the room, I was at the other,

and all of our children were in the middle. We then, at random, commanded our children to come. The scenario looked like this:

Myself: (In a pleasant tone) Rebekah, come here.

My wife: (In a pleasant tone) Naomi, come here.

When the children came, we smothered them with hugs. Then, when we commanded our youngest to come, the others took both of her arms and raced her over for her share of the affection. It only took a few times before she came running on her own.

Two more points. First, never call your toddler to you to punish him. Rather, you go to the child. If you punish your child after he obeys you, it may confuse him.

Second, in the same way that you expect quick cheerful obedience, you should expect a job to be done well. Children can begin learning how to work at an early age. As soon as your child is old enough to take his toys out, he's old enough to put them away. To teach, first set a good example (duh), and then do the job with your toddler, helping him until it is done properly. It is not as effective to criticize a poorly done job as it is to ask him as you are doing it together, "Did we get everything?" or "How does this look?" Chores may take more work in the beginning while teaching a toddler, but the time invested now will pay great dividends later.

How to Lecture

Before writing this paper, I asked my children to tell me things I should have done differently. They said that my number one mistake was lecturing them during punishments. They all thought that it was counterproductive. By lecture, they meant telling them things that they already knew.

What they called *preparatory conversations* are different. For instance, showing the ultimate cost of breaking a pencil everyday was instructive and helped my children to understand why arbitrarily breaking things is wrong.

Before giving a lecture, ask yourself if you are giving it as part of the punishment (i.e. "You moron, you know better than to play baseball in the backyard!"), or if you are giving it to instruct, ("Let's say electricity costs 10 cents per kilowatt hour. If we leave a 100-watt light bulb on for three hours every night, how much will that cost in one year? If that money earned interest in the bank ...? Here, I'll help you figure it out").

Another thing I often did, when I gave lectures, was that I use the mistakes and bad behavior of others as bad examples. My motive is not to gossip about the people who have misbehaved, but rather to save my children from making the same errors. It is important to teach your children that their behavior (good or bad) has consequences. Though using your acquaintances' bad behavior for an example may seem insensitive, not only is it effective, the Bible also uses bad people for bad examples.

But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou ... - Galatians 2:14a

Do you see someone headed for trouble? Tell your children, "See that kid, he is headed for trouble!" Later, when your prediction comes true, remind your children of what you said earlier.

I once asked one of my daughters if she could ever be tempted to use meth. She looked shocked, and assured me that there was no way. I knew her answer before she said it, but it was pleasant to see her shocked

expression anyway. Because she has heard me predict failures, and has then seen those people ruining their lives, any invitation to do drugs will sound to her like, "Hey you look like a happy person, do you want to ruin your life?"

When someone in your circle of acquaintances has made a poor choice in friends, is experimenting with drugs, is rebelling against parents, has just moved in with a boyfriend, or is becoming unequally yoked in marriage, it is easy to predict their outcome. And predicting their outcome early will help your children to understand cause and effect, and the wisdom of obeying God.

Avoid Creative Corrections

About two years ago I wrote the following.

"**Avoid creative alternatives** to spanking. Many timeouts will not accomplish the work of one spanking. If you give your child "timeouts", they will be counterproductive if he is sulking while he is sitting in the corner. Do not expect child behavior specialist to be able to figure this out."⁵

About two weeks after I wrote the above paragraph, a book from *Focus on the Family* fell into my hands. The title? *Creative Correction*.⁶ Unfortunately, many children will needlessly suffer when parents apply the principles taught in this book. Using *Creative Correction* for an outline, I'm going to reply to her opinions on correcting children, point by point.

[Elders] that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. 1 Timothy 5:20

This is not a mean spirited attack against *Focus on the Family*; I am only interested in showing how to raise obedient and happy children. This author, by her own testimony, is constantly creatively correcting her children. This is because, though they may be trendy, creative corrections do not work.

While they may help to momentarily control outward behavior, in every case creative corrections fail to help the child build character. With this point in mind, let's look at some ways not to train children.

Give your child a timeout. When your child has, a bad attitude, make him sit and cool down for a period of time.

My Comment: To be honest, I did stand my children in the corner for bad behavior. But if I had it to do again, I would not discipline them that way, I chose this punishment when I was tired or lazy. Though it is a common punishment, if I had thought about it more carefully, I would have realized that it does not produce good fruit. If you do stand your children in a corner or make them sit for a timeout, can you be sure that they are really thinking penitent thoughts and not just sitting there sulking?

Many creative corrections involved such things as writing an essay, practicing typing, practicing on the piano, or doing a few pages of math.

My Comment: Give these out as punishments to your child if you are training him to hate writing, typing, piano and math.

Another punishment is to make your child listen to the New Testament on tape for twenty days, instead of the usual *Adventures in Odyssey*.

My Comment: Even a delinquent, like Tom Sawyer, can figure out that punishing the child with Scripture will teach him to hate the Word of God.

The punishment for stamping feet in anger (or throwing a fit) is to make the child continue to stamp his feet (or throw a fit).

My Comment: Unfortunately while doing homework is not addictive, sin is. 'Venting steam' may be good for a teakettle, but forcing children to vent steam will not improve their character. The best you can hope and pray for is that, in enforcing bad behavior, it does not become an addiction.

Here I have a confession to make. Though I write like an expert, I really don't know what I am talking about. How can I teach children *how* to stop stamping their feet in anger, when none of my children has ever done so? I will also admit that I have no idea why a child who is encouraged to behave badly will become addicted to bad behavior, while one who is forced to write essays as a punishment will not become addicted to writing essays. Unfortunate, isn't it? If you ever figure this out, let me know.

In one example of a creative correction, a grandmother threatened kisses when her ten-year-old grandson threw a fit because she would not buy the more expensive shoes.

My Comment: It is no wonder that children want their parents to drop them off a block before school.

Again, this scenario is foreign to me, since none of my children (after infancy) has ever thrown fits. However, I will venture to give my opinion. I would not threaten to kiss my child in public (as a form of punishment), because I do not want him ever to be embarrassed by me. A better solution would be to calmly tell your child that he is buying his own shoes from now on, and then stick to your word.

Many of the creative corrections suggested giving monetary rewards for good behavior. For instance, pay your child an allowance for doing his chores.

My Comment: When you pay your children to behave, they are missing the opportunity to build character. When you ask your young adults to do something, and they respond with, "What will you pay me?" remember that you trained them from a young age to take bribes.

Paying a child to do his chores is not the same thing as contracting with him to do other work. There should be certain chores that are a regular part of the family contribution, which nobody is paid for. Contracting out a special job (think of it as selling one of your own chores) gives your child a chance to earn money and learn responsibility, while lightening your own workload.

Use monetary inducements to discourage negative behavior. For instance, it is suggested that a parent give his children money when starting out on a long car trip. Each time the children quarrel, fine them a quarter. Whatever money they have left at the end of the trip, they can split.

My Comment: If you pay your child to *not* misbehave, he will, by the time he is an adult, have a nice resume, should he ever wish to sell insurance for the Mafia. At the very least, you are missing the opportunity to build your child's character.

Another creative monetary correction was to hit the pocket book of the child transgressor.

My Comment: Unless your child voluntarily agrees to this form of discipline ahead of time, it may be a mistake. It discourages savings. After all, why should a child bother earning money if it is just going to be confiscated anyway? As a child, I probably would have hid my money from my parents. This correction may undermine two things that I desire from my children: first, transparency; second, the ability to learn financial responsibility.

Another creative correction is to ground or remove privileges for a week.

My Comment: Some corrections drag on and on. If you ground or remove privileges for a week, it will cause a cloud to hang over the happy home for a whole week. Use the rod and get it over with. Your child will then have paid the price, and a moment later he will be in your arms with a clean slate.

When children talk mean to each other, the punishment is to make them think of three nice things to say, in order to build up the offended child's self-esteem.

My Comment: When the offended child knows that the offending child gave him three compliments only as a punishment, how does this build up his self-esteem? Nor does it draw the offending one's heart closer to the sibling he must flatter. The best I would hope for, with this punishment, is that it will not encourage an offending child to get into a habit of making two-faced compliments.

For one correction, the author recommends that the child who behaved badly was not to leave her side all day.

My Comment: Actually, this creative correction may have possibilities. The idea of spending more time with one's children will give you more opportunity to train them.

Another piece of advice is that, when you are talking to someone, have your child place his hand on your shoulder instead of interrupting you; tell him that you will answer him as soon as you can make a break in the conversation.

My Comment: This is good creative idea, but it is not a correction. Creative parenting is acceptable; just avoid using creative corrections as an alternative to Biblical discipline.

It may seem like I'm being a little obsessive, but a lot of people are applying these techniques, even though they do not work. The author of *Creative Correction* herself states, "You know how bickering can just wear you out. It's highly stressful to listen to fighting all day long. The next time your kids can't seem to get along and you're at your wit's end, call them over to do some damage control."

Again, I do not know if I am qualified to teach on this, since I have never had children bickering until I was worn out. Nor have I ever been stressed by listen to fighting all day long. A spanking on the first offence (when consistently applied) would have brought the occasional bickering to an end before breakfast came off the stove.

*That turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers.
- Isaiah 44:25b-26a*

According her book, the author of *Creative Correction* believes that she is doing a good job parenting. But until she is willing to take the blame for her children's behavior, she will never have well behaved children. This next quote is a belief that is commonly held among parents.

"I must confess that if I'd been able to force my children to obey me out of fear while they were young, I would have parented that way. It's so much easier-but it's the wrong approach. In hindsight, I'm glad I was unsuccessful at using fear tactics. It would have made life simpler while my kids were young, but I'd rather see them obey me - and God - wholeheartedly, out of love."

This may look good at first glance, but let's look a little closer at what this is really saying.

When the author says, "If I'd been able to force my children to obey me out of fear while they were young..." she implies that she could not make her children obey her when they were young. She may know this by now, but I have news for her: the older they get, the harder they are to control.

I agree that no one can speak against children who obey their parents and God wholeheartedly, out of love. Yet, if you read her book, you will see that the author's children do not obey her at all, much less out of love (pages 333-345)⁶. When children are not obedient out of love, you have two options: either you can tolerate disobedient, unloving children, or you can correct the disobedient, unloving children.

Let us talk about fear. A common misconception about fear is that, in a well-disciplined household, obedient children are always living in fear, like small tykes who cannot escape the neighborhood bully. With proper training, nothing could be further from the truth. This cowering fear is exactly proportional to the amount and length of the anger you display toward your children. So, when you are training a toddler, never spank him in anger (teach him to respond to a normal tone of voice). If he knows that you love him, and he understands his boundaries, he will not live in fear. He will simply submit his will to yours, that is all.

No matter what your punishments are, when a child disobeys there will be (at least for a moment) a cloud hanging over him. However, a well-disciplined child need seldom experience that cloud. When good behavior is a way of life, your children will be happy, thoughtful, content, helpful, considerate, forgetful, compassionate, loving, clumsy, sensitive, cheerful, but never fearful.

And never fear! Well-disciplined children REALLY DO love their parents.

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. - Hebrews 12:6

Is the author truly glad that she was unsuccessful in using "fear tactics"? Is she glad that her son sulks for hours on end, or that her other kids bicker for days?⁶

Again, in closing, this is not an attack on the author of *Creative Correction* or on *Focus on the Family*. I really feel for this family. The mother, who is trying, has worn herself out. But her doctors and counselors are useless, mistaking behavioral problems for medical ones.

Let me reiterate: while creative corrections may help to momentarily control outward behavior, they often fail to build a child's character. Creative corrections are contemporary; they are not Biblical. Often ineffective, when they replace Biblical discipline they are counterproductive.

This does not mean though, that there are never situations that call for some form of discipline other than a spanking.

- I might add another job to my child's chore list, if he was performing poorly, or I might add time to a job, if he was performing it too slowly. Your child should understand these rules beforehand. The idea is that your child should learn to do even jobs that he doesn't like properly.

- I would not spank for an infraction that took place much earlier. For example, I would not spank today for yesterday's saucy attitude.
- If a child makes a mess, depending on the circumstances, it may be sufficient for him to help you clean it up.
- If an absent-minded child has forgotten to carry out a command, I would not begin with a spanking, unless I was certain that the behavior was on purpose, or unless the behavior was chronic.

Apologize for Mistakes

I have a confession to make here. Our children behave better than my wife and I do. My wife's parents, and my own, allowed us to throw temper tantrums at the age of three, mine couldn't control me at seventeen, and now, at the age of fifty, there are times that it is difficult and takes conscious effort for me to control my spirit. Though I don't fall on the ground kicking my feet and holding my breath (at least not very often 😊). As people get older, spoiled behavior takes the form of sulking, and like other bad behavior, is addictive. It is harder for me to have a pleasant attitude when I do not get my way, then it is for my children under the same circumstances. Boy do I wish that my parents had disciplined me more consistently!

Parents make mistakes when raising children. Apologize when you do. If you think that your spouse made a mistake while disciplining a child, discuss the error with your spouse privately, and then let the spouse that is at fault apologize to the child for his error.

When we humble ourselves and apologize, we are helping to keep our children from becoming resentful. We are also teaching them by example how to be humble.

He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? - Micah 6:8

Sometimes children feel that what we request is unfair. It is important that they obey your commands at the time in question, regardless (in the same way, Jesus should be able to expect unconditional obedience from us). However, children should know that it is our goal to make righteous judgments (in the same way that we can expect righteous judgments from God), and that they are welcome to negotiate or explain their view of the events at a later time.

While our children may appeal one of our decisions later, one thing we did not allow was for our children play us against each other. By this, I mean that, if I gave a decree, they were not allowed to ask Mother the same question later, unless they also mentioned to her my earlier decision. When my wife knows of my earlier decree, she can be an advocate for them, when we discuss the merits of our children's appeal. As long as our children obeyed this rule, they were permitted to make their appeal strategically to the parent most likely to be sympathetic to their plight.

Consistently Discipline

I will close the section on discipline by admonishing you to be consistent. This is **extremely** important. If you are not consistent, discipline will not only be ineffective, it will often be counterproductive. Let me share a quote from Lisa Many, a legal assistant in Chapel Hill, N.C., who said that she spanked her children "a few times out of frustration".

"I've probably spanked my son maybe three or five times, and my daughter maybe three or five times. All it does is gets them angry. I mean it gets their attention, but in the long run, I don't know." (Goode, 2001)

Many parents conclude that spankings are ineffective; few realize that it is their own inconsistency that makes it so.

About twenty years ago, I was shopping at a local grocery store with my wife. As we walked up an aisle, I saw a child go over to the Hostess Ho Hos[®] display. He completely ignored his fuming mother's command to 'come here', until she finally grabbed his arm and jerked him away.

About five minutes later, I was surprised to see that the child had escaped her clutch. He ran back, and began climbing the shelves to reach the coveted treat. A moment later, the livid mother stormed back, and furiously pulled him off the shelf. He began to throw a tantrum (wow what a surprise) while she, at her wits end, again dragged him off. They were only ten feet away from the Hostess shelf, when she stopped, hesitated for a second, then without realizing the eternal damnation of her inconsistency, turned and grabbed the Ho Hos[®] for her son.

If my children had witnessed this event, I would have told them, "See that mother? Her kid is headed for trouble!"

Unlike this vacillating mother, my wife has stamina, even more than I do; she is likely to suggest fighting the war on every front. However, more important than trying to discipline every defect, is to *consistently discipline* the faults that you have chosen to tackle. If you are new to the battle (just starting to discipline your child), do not start a campaign that you do not intend to finish. Pick the most important battles first, and add others if you can still keep up. Most importantly, if you try to discipline your child for a temper tantrum one time, and then give in to a tantrum on another occasion, at best your child will be confused, but more likely your child will learn that persistent rebellion pays off.

Michael Pearl gives an example of how to consistently train a twelve-month-old:

As I sat talking with a local Amish fellow, a typical child training session developed. The twelve-month-old boy, sitting on his father's lap, suddenly developed a compulsion to slide to the floor. Due to the cold floor, the father directed the child to stay in his lap. The child stiffened and threw his arms up to lessen the father's grip and facilitate his slide to the floor. The father spoke to him in the German language (which I did not understand) and firmly placed him back in the sitting position. The child made dissenting noises and continued his attempt to dismount his father's lap. The father then spanked the child and spoke what I assumed to be reproofing words. Seeing his mother across the room, the child began to cry and reach for her. This was understandable in any language. It was obvious that the child felt there would be more liberty with his mother.

At this point, I became highly interested in the proceedings. The child was attempting to go around the chain of command. Most fathers would have been glad to pass the troublesome child to his mother. If the child had been permitted to initiate the transfer, he would have been the one doing the training, not the parents. Mothers often run to their children in this situation, because they crave the gratification of being needed. But this mother was more concerned for her child's training than for her own sentiment. She appeared not to hear the child's plea.

The father then turned the child to face away from his mother. The determined fellow immediately understood that the battle lines had been drawn. He expressed his will to dominate by throwing his leg back over to the other side to face his mother. The father spanked the leg the child turned toward his mother and again spoke to him.

...

During the following forty-five minutes, the child shifted his legs fifteen times, **and received a spanking each time**. The father was as calm as a lazy porch swing on a Sunday afternoon. There was no hastiness or anger in his response. He did not take the disobedience personally. He had trained many horses and mules and knew the value of patient perseverance. In the end, the twelve-month-old submitted his will to his father, sat as he was placed, and **became content-even cheerful**. (Pearl & Pearl, 1994)

There is one final point to watch out for in consistency: do not slack up on your younger children. It's easy to become confident and relaxed with the younger children, if the older ones are doing well. To keep up with your discipline over the long haul takes more vigilance than it does stamina, because it is hard to spot their subtle drift. It is nice, with the younger ones, to be able to eliminate those experiments that did not work with the older ones, but be careful: my older children have mentioned that the younger ones get away with things that they never would have.

I have ended with this section on consistency, because it is relative to everything that I have written. It's relative to everything from controlling your child's environment to discipline. I say this over and over, but even still, most parents will never get it. If you:

- Discipline for a tantrum one day...
- Control your child's friends one day...
- Turn off the television one day...

... and don't the next, you may make your child more unmanageable than he would be if you never began in the first place.

Conclusion

Recently I was asked about raising children. Though I failed to elaborate on how, I responded that raising godly children was simple. After reading what I have written, I still believe that it is simple. But I should have added that it was not easy. You do not need a college education, nor do you need a lot of physical strength. However, you will need commitment and stamina, especially when your children are young. This may be why God gives babies to younger parents.

You do not have to be a perfect in order to be a good parent. I am not even close. But don't let this discourage you. When you make a mistake, apologize, learn and move on. Kids are resilient.

In writing this paper, I may have implied that the only emotion my children have ever experienced was happiness. Though they normally are happy, they are not always so. When they have other emotions, though, they also have the self-control to deal with them. Furthermore, I have talked about happiness as if it were the final goal. This is not so. While my children's happiness is pleasant, my final goal is to take my

children with me to heaven. It is not entirely true that you can take nothing with you; your children are an exception.

I have shared precise methods for raising godly children. In so doing, I have made frequent connections between applying some form discipline and a promised result, but this oversimplifies the truth about child rearing. Child rearing it is not an exact science. Rather, it is a way of life. It's not the method; it's the madness. If the world does not think that you are ruining your children, if they do not believe that you are hopelessly idealistic and over protective, you may not be raising your kids right.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. - Isaiah 55:8-9

AND

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. - 1 Corinthians 3:19

If you can be motivated by this concept, you will be able to raise Godly children. If you apply the methods consistently, but without the conviction that *the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*, you will still be able to raise obedient children, but not necessarily Godly ones. If you apply the methods half heartedly, you may, like Lisa Many, be forced to say, "I mean it gets their attention, but in the long run, I don't know." (Goode, 2001)

If you are like the Bereans in the Book of Acts, if you pick your counselors carefully and compare their advice with scripture, you can succeed. I know that someday I will stand before God and explain why I have given this advice. For this reason, I give it carefully. Another question that I expect God may ask many Christians is, "I see that you are here, but what about your children? Where are they?"

Your mission, should you chose to accept it, is to raise your children so that you may someday stand blameless before God.

Written by [Jeff Barnes](#) and Elisabeth Barnes

Endnotes

- [1] While I recommend *To Train Up a Child*, some of Mike Pearl's opinions differ from my own.
- [2] *Focus on the Family* has many good resources, however because modern psychology occasionally takes preference to the scripture, I do not indorse them.
- [3] <http://www.askamissionary.com/question/80>
- [4] <http://www.demographicwinter.com/index.html>
- [5] I wrote this in 2007, in a ruff draft of *Preventing ADHD*

- [6] Creative Correction: Extraordinary Ideas for Everyday Discipline. By Lisa Whelchel, (2005) Tyndale House Publishers Inc.
- [7] <http://www.crossexamined.org/>
- [8] <http://psychdata.blogspot.com/search?updated-min=2007-01-01T00%3A00%3A00-05%3A00&updatedmax=2008-01-01T00%3A00%3A00-05%3A00&max-results=50>
- [10] Winner, L. F. (2005, May 13). *Sex in the Body of Christ*. Retrieved October 06, 2009, from Christianity Today magazine: www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/may/34.28.html

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