

the-Gospel.org

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. 😊

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Your Child's Environment	4
Have Bible Studies Nightly	4
Home-School Your Children	6
Control Your Children's Friendships	9
Pick Your Hobbies Carefully	10
Teaching Children to be Honest	10
Discipline	13
Starting in Infancy	13
Corporal Punishment	14
Demand Obedience	16
How to Lecture	17
Avoid Creative Corrections	18
Consistency is Important in Discipline	22
More Than Discipline	23
Actively Unspoil Your Children	24
Teach Your Children Unfairness	25
The Appeals Process	26
Do not Forbid, Teach	26
Rebellion	29
Is Your Teenager an Adolescent or Young Adult?	29
Is Rebellion Normal?	29
What are the Objects of Our Children's Attention?	30
Overprotective Parents	30
Marriage	31
Be a Parent	32
Home, the Center of Our Universe	33
Television	33
Music	34
Internet	34
Reading	34
Baby Sitters	34
The Church's Influence	35
No Sunday School	35
No Bible Camps	35
What About Holidays?	36
Conclusion	36

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, "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. Contrary wise many childcare professionals do not have happy, obedient children and the reason is simple: you cannot go to school to learn how to raise them. Therefore, 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 often 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. This study will show you how wrong our culture is, and those using Biblical principles can expect to raise godly, happy, obedient children. While the principles in this study will be most effective if they are applied from infancy, with care, they can be adapted for use with older children.

My qualifications as teacher are simple, for the last twenty-seven 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 to be a teenager and still love your parents? In September of 2009, my wife and I attended a mission conference at the church some of my children regularly attend. As we were greeted, everyone commented to us about how impressed they were with our children, and many asked how we raised our children so that now I have decided to the formula write down.

My wife and I have instructed many on how to raise godly children. If you read this with an open heart, you will learn many of our secrets. 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. With this in mind, let us look at four ways to protect you young child.

Have Bible Studies Nightly

First, for our family's devotional time, we have a nightly Bible study. While other devotional books may have their value, do not use them in place of the Bible. My personal 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 like Revelation or Leviticus.

Before our children were old enough for a Bible study, about five years old, my wife read them *Hurlbut's Story of the Bible*. We recommend this storybook because of its faithfulness to biblical facts. We would never use storybooks that were not factually accurate or ones that make the Bible seem like a book of fables. For instance, many children's books make Noah's ark look overloaded or cut holes in the roof for the giraffes. Never teach your children to believe fables. If you teach them to believe in Santa Claus, 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

Regular Bible studies will give you ample material to teach children how to resist the destructive force of peer pressure. It will be easier defuse the power of peer pressure, if you do so before a peer group controls your child.

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. - Acts 5:29

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 neither she nor I knew any of their acquaintances. However, 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 scornfully.

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. A few minutes later they were all enjoying the game.

Whether or not the kids played spoons is not important, we all know how peer pressure tries to make our children conform to the world. 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. Being able to resist it then, I know she has the will to resist peer pressure in the future. The reason it did not intimidate her was that 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. Even if he hasn't previously addressed some issues, he will still know how to research them.

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, as their first experience, a skeptic address our children alone.

Hermeneutics

This is the science of interpreting the Bible. When we come to 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. [23 Mistakes Not To Make While Studying Your Bible](#) and Camas Valley Christian Fellowship's [Inductive Bible Study](#) may be helpful resources.

Cults

Taking this a step further, when they come up, we look at the passages commonly used by cults and explain them during our quiet time. A good Biblical foundation is the best way to inoculate your children against the 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. If our children were well versed, they would know that the Bible not only tells them so, but God also tell us why He says it is so. It is essential that your children understand the whys before they attend a college or university.

Can you defend The Book of Genesis as a historical document? 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 of our nightly Bible studies, 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. In 2009, I was at a [Focus on the Family](#)² apologetics conference for teenagers called the *Big Dig*. The conference was good, 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 and start questioning 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 is 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: our 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

Home-School Your Children

While this is not possible for everyone to do this, 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

In contrast, 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. None of my peer group would ever have admitted to being a virgin in our public high school, and I doubt things have changed much.

Our amoral drug awareness education was no better; it included most recreational drugs, what they looked like, and their street names mixed with some scare tactics. My best friend and I learned enough in these classes to feel comfortable at our 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 The Ten Commandments 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 another example, in February of 2011, School officials at Taper Avenue Elementary in San Pedro California, [committed a 6-year-old to a psychiatric ward](#) against his parent's wishes after he drew a violent drawing at school and wrote that he wanted to die. In an interview, his mother said that the picture was from a video game he played and that he was not suicidal, rather he was depressed because his father was being deployed to Iraq.

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 would come from a public education, she was willing to try. And it turns out that the most important thing a parent needs is commitment. Experience has shown us that just about anybody can give a child a better education at home than is offered in most 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 I know 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.

Let me boast for a moment, while neither my wife or I have any formal education that would qualify us to homeschool our children, 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 99 and 96 percentiles. 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, with a little dedication, a homeschooler can learn more in three hours than a child in public school 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 does not surprise me.

Another hindrance to individual attention is 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. If I said how little we spent last year to home school our own children, we would have a social worker come to our door.

Look at our national debt and do the math; we are mortgaging our children's future. 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, we were often warned that our children would become socially dysfunctional if we did not send them to a public school. However now that my children are adults, I have yet to hear "I told you so".

To the contrary, public schooled children often have difficulty socializing 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

By the time you notice bad grades, it may be 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 that I met at school.

It is the year 2011, and I have seven children. Two are still teenagers, the rest 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 homeschooling parents that we know (with the same worldview), have also missed the experience of teenage rebellion. Maybe one source of teenage rebellion is the public school system.

I have seen many products of the public school system in my own neighborhood, my heart pours out to them. It may mean a sacrifice in personal comfort to have a stay at home mom, but I do not know any parents who have later regretted it. If you need help in starting to home school go to HSLDA, or email us at jeffrey@the-gospel.org.

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

Together with -

*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, when they were little, we did not allow them to play with other children unsupervised. You must always be on your guard, 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 and Ouija board. 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

Pick Your Hobbies Carefully

As parents, you should not have hobbies that do not include your kids. You can take your five year old camping much easier and he will probably get more from it, than if you 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, you should consider trying to make your hobbies mission minded. Simply look 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.

Teaching Children to be Honest

Honesty has always been a top priority in our child rearing goals. Now, after having successfully raised seven honest children, we can say, without reservation, that this 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, as long as they were honest.

I did this as an experiment with our first child, and it worked better than I had hoped. From a very young age, our children developed a habit of coming to us as soon as they had done anything wrong. 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.

Therefore we had no problem with tattletales. 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 tattletale'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 a sibling was to tell on another was when the culprit was doing something dangerous or destructive AND when the culprit did not stop after the other had already warned him. Though this may have happened, I cannot remember a case.

I can remember times coming home from work and as I drove up, they would run for the car, not even waiting for me to come inside. They were quick to learn that having their transgressions forgiven made for a happy home.

Once, when my son James was twelve years old, his chore for the day was to change the oil in our truck. I gave him some instructions and 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 truck. The incident was an accident, and not rebellious behavior. We went out together and looked at what turned out to be only minor damage.

The important thing 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. Some skeptics have found it hard to believe that our children never abused this promise 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 toward us, has discouraged them from sinning.

I will admit that there were things that we needed to explain after they made a confession. For example, when one daughter hit a baseball through a window, we looked for another place to play baseball. However, there was no lecture (telling her what she already knew), no anger and no punishment.

An important 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 has 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

Even if your children are older, I would still apply this rule, though you may not see such dramatic results. What if your cherub has already begun to 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. The reason honesty is so important to me is that I want to spare other children the pain my dishonesty caused me.

*These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, **a lying tongue**, and hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, **A false witness that speaketh lies**, and he that soweth discord among brethren. - Proverbs 6:16-19 (Note how two of the seven are lies!)*

My advice for the parent of a child who cannot be honest:

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 until you know that you can 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 that he thought he got away with it.
8. Spank him every time you catch him lying. Because of the importance of honesty in keeping him out of other trouble when he is older, 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, do not 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 told the truth, was to help instill honesty in our children; since then, we have seen other benefits come out of it as well. One 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 are always found eventually.

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!

Finally, 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 me, according to statistics, our marriage would have failed, and they themselves would have grown up very differently. Even so, I try to share my past with them in a way that gives glory to God for my success.

Discipline

Starting 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.

For example, when my oldest daughter was about one year old she was well trained in most areas, however, in one area she had my wife well trained. During meal times she expected to be fed the moment her food was placed on the table, if not she started screaming. 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. Because my wife had always given in to her in this area, it was going on for a while before I noticed. And when I finally did noticed, this habit was deeply entrenched.

Nevertheless, I made up my mind to cure her. The night the training started, I decided that 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 the battle started out the same way, for the first few minutes, our baby's tantrums were fierce. In fact, 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. 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 him down without him throwing a tantrum. Not only will this make the mother's day pleasanter:

- It is safer to put the baby down, especially when Mom needs both hands to cook.
- Other housekeeping chores go much faster, giving her more quality time with her baby.
- It 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. For instance, it will be difficult to teach them how to be cheerful by example when mother is always haggard.

Of course, as an alternative to training, parents can give their baby a pacifier to make him stop crying. By doing so, they are wasting important opportunities to train. I personally 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 appetite. If your baby is crying:

- Because he is cold, put some clothes on him.
- Because he is hungry, feed him.

- Because he has a dirty diaper, change it.
- 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 could reward the tantrum by cuddling the baby. 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 in the beginning doesn't know how. 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 it is to undo fifteen-year-old bad habits in an adolescent.

Corporal Punishment

The Bible admonishes to us spank our children, 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 also 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 (if he/she even has one). My most discontent child is happier and more content than his/her most well adjusted child. If any of you believe that gambling is a sin, this is not a gamble. 😊

To be fair, not every single psychiatrist apposes 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 is important enough to read again. While many doctors give some wiggle room, a post like this from the psychiatric community is rare. Unfortunately, there is not much money in correcting children, but it is a lucrative business to medicate them.

If you have read any 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. Since they cannot tell the difference, it may be just as well that they do not spank their own children.

Never spank your child in anger, I know this should be obvious. What may not be so obvious is that you will never come to the end of your rope if you spank early. The parents who discipline their child when they have finally lost their temper are the ones who create the sorry statistics 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 (by his arms) into your arms. It is easy for a parent, at the end of his rope, to dislocate a child's shoulder 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 bare hand. When I spank using my hand, I can feel what I am doing; I want to leave a sting, not a welt or internal injuries.

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 still need only a little swat, but if you are repeatedly correcting him, apply more sting.

Again, it 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. Also, once the transgressor reaches adolescence corporal punishment is ineffective at least, and will probably be counterproductive.

To protect your child's dignity, and to protect them from dishonest social workers, spank in private. Our 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 questioned for this paragraph, do not remember me ever having spanked them.

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 Bobby." Instead say, "Bobby,, 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. Do not say, "The garbage looks like it needs emptying", rather say something like, "Please empty the garbage".
- 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 a 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. If the child fails to come at this point, the parent will then administer some form of discipline.

Not understanding what tonal language is, many parents, using the above method, have successfully trained their



children to obey only when they are yelled at in a *tone* of screaming rage at 124 decibels. This is because the child knows that the 24 and 50-decibel requests can be ignored without suffering any repercussion. For your child's safety, by the time your child learns to walk, he should learn to come at your command.

Two more points. First, never call your toddler to you to punish him. Rather, go to your child, as punishing your child after he obeys you by coming 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 is old enough to put them away. To teach, first set a good example (I know I should not need to say that), 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. Reflecting back, 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, how many times do I have to tell you to turn out the lights when you leave a room!!!"), or if you are giving it as an instruction ("If electricity costs 10 cents per kilowatt hour and we leave all these lights on every night, how much will that cost in one year? Here, I'll help you figure it out").

Another thing I recommend when giving lectures, use the mistakes and bad behavior of others as bad examples. You should not be gossiping about the people who have misbehaved, but rather using their bad examples to save your children from making the same errors. It is important to teach your children that their own behavior (good or bad) has consequences. Though using your acquaintances' bad behavior for an example may seem insensitive, not only is it effective, it is scriptural as the Bible also uses (even good) 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*

AND

This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. - 2 Timothy 1:15

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

heard me predict the results of foolish behavior, and later saw these predictions come true, they are far more inclined to listen to my advice. 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

In 2007 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 am 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*; our only interest is 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, there were times that I did stand my child in the corner for bad behavior. However, 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 think of writing, typing, piano and math as punishments.

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, outside of infancy, has ever thrown a fit. 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 would 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, a long time for a young child. Use the rod and get it over. Your child will then have paid the price, and a moment later, he will be in your arms with a clean slate.

When a child talks mean to another, the punishment is to make him 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 it was a punishment for the offending child to give him three complements, how will this build up his self-esteem? Nor does it draw the offending one's heart closer to the sibling he is being forced to 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: Hmm, this creative correction may have possibilities. The idea of spending more time with one's children when they need it, actually appeals to me.

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. Being a creative parent is good since we do not want to imitate a culture that is failing our children. Just avoid using creative corrections as an alternative to Biblical discipline.

One of our children was slow at learning to come. Since the problem was not rebellion, punishment was not the answer. Our creative solution, which taught our child in less than ten minutes, 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: 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 eagerly came toddling over to us on her own. Creative parenting may be okay, but not creative corrections.

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. Yet, 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 if she does not; the older they get, if left unchecked, 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)¹¹. 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, yet never fearful.

And you need not 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. The problem is much bigger than this one self-help book; because of the popularity of this kind of advice, we are losing our children.

Let me reiterate, even if creative corrections did momentarily control outward behavior, they will 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 might teach him to write a note or use some other technique to help his memory. I would not spank, unless I was certain that the behavior was on purpose, though once when a case of forgetfulness was chronic and after a fair warning, a spanking was known to improve memory.

Consistency is Important in 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 when I saw 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.

Here the mother scolds her son and less than ten seconds later rewards him for the same offence. If my children had witnessed this event, I would have told them, "Did you see what that mother just did? Her kid is headed for trouble!"

Unlike this vacillating mother, my wife has more stamina 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 only be confused, but even more likely your child will learn that persistent rebellion pays off.

Author 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 got away with things that they never would have.

I have ended this section on discipline with a chapter 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, some 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, it will take twice as much work to get the same results or you may make your child more unmanageable than he would be if you never began in the first place.

More Than Discipline

Being able to raise a functional happy family takes more than just disciplining children.

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.

Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. - Proverbs 16:18

That said, 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 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 once they have grown up.

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 [Jesus] 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

AND

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 and make sure they win. 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 (for me it was a game of checkers with my grandfather), 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?" If you can keep from spoiling your children when they are young, you will overcome a major barrier to having 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 socialist country in history tries to practice fairness, and they all suffer from poverty, you can use them as examples. But, even if we were in a third world country, God would still expect us to teach our children how to be content.

And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. - 1 Timothy 6:8

Another principle to learn from socialism is that 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 the source for many 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, do not 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 last 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 were enough to go around, I would give out far fewer treats. When I had only a few treats (not enough to go around) I expected my other kids to be happy for the ones 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.

The Appeals Process

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.

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.

We also established an appeal process for our children. By this, I mean that, if I gave a decree or did not give them some permission, they were allowed to ask their Mother the same question (or vice versa), as long as they also mentioned to her my earlier decision. Mentioning my earlier decision prevented our children from ever playing us against each other. When my wife knows of my earlier decree, she knows that she is being asked and can be an advocate for them. 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. Truthfully, there were times when my first decision, when reflected upon, needed to be amended.

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 an exact science, rather our standards were designed to teach our children to think.

When my children were little, I forbade chewing bubble gum in the house (after that for some reason, gum was one of their favorite candies). However, I did allow matches, smoking, playing with guns, and haircuts of any type. At first glance, this may seem worse than arbitrary, so let us 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 dangerous places when we transgressed. There were several times when one of my siblings nearly burnt the house down. Like shiny objects to a fish, fire seemed to have an irresistible pull that we could not resist. With these memories in mind, I never arbitrarily forbade my children to play with matches. Instead, I taught them how to play with matches safely, and then gave them a place (the middle of the driveway) where they were allowed to do their experiments.

One advantage for us is that for ten years we have heated with a wood stove; it is a comfort to know that my children have always been safe around fire.

Guns

One time my younger brother found a loaded Colt 1911 pistol in the creek behind our parent's house. After he showed it to me, we cleaned out the mud and proceeded to shoot it. The bullets still worked!

For this reason, I taught my children gun safety from an early age. After hearing many *gun accident* stories, my fear was that, even with all the other controls, someday 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. I sincerely believe any of my children would have run to tell an adult that their friend was handling a gun unsafely. Note: 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, you should still 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 (just like you should do with a real gun), etc.

Smoking

None of my seven children ever smoked, even once, while growing up, even though it never was forbidden. Without defending my position, I think that making smoking forbidden is one of its main attractions. I do believe that children should be educated 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. Rather, 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, we never found one). 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 (the only time one of my kids did), 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 did ask 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 has lost her salvation? If she does, she may be tempted to throw the baby out with the bath water. At that point, pierced ears 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 during our evening Bible study, (When we read any verse relevant to partying):

"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.

With one exception, none of my children ever attended a party where alcohol was served, excepting formal events (like weddings). At fifteen, one daughter 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

Though the things in this chapter were not forbidden, I did fear for my children while they were growing up, lest the devil did ensnare them. Perhaps the little things like educating them would have been insufficient by themselves, yet as they were used alongside the other advice mentioned in this study, they did work.

Also, do not assume from the previous paragraphs that we allowed our children to do anything they wanted. We are not libertarian, it's just that I am not interested in letting our culture decide what is right and wrong for me

and my children. For instance, in the 19th century, it was permissible to smoke, and fornicating was a sin. Today in our culture, even among Christians, it is wrong to smoke but permissible to [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 (they may have disagreed about 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

Rebellion

Is Your Teenager an Adolescent 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 teenager 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 world view 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. It is okay if you disagree with me on some of the finer points in this study. I may rewrite those sentences over someday anyway. However, if you disagree with the main premise, you are fighting against success. Teenage rebellion does not have to happen. Our family is not abnormal, today we know many families with children who did not rebel growing up nor did they expect them to.



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 as little girls they play house, thus we raise them to be mothers, which is their God given roll and in their play they are learning to care for others. However, boys grow up playing with fire trucks, hunting and driving motorcycles and in their play, the center of their existence focuses on themselves. They are not raised to be fathers.

Perhaps another problem is that sons need to spend more time with their fathers. It is hard being a breadwinner then come home and actively participate in the family. Yet, for better or worse, we are being role models.

I will try to develop this thought further. If anyone has any other ideas on this, I would like to hear them.

Overprotective Parents

Have you ever been accused of overprotecting your young children? In our culture, that is a compliment. All of nature testifies that protecting children is why God made parents. In fact, we cannot protect our young children enough. But, we cannot be overprotective their whole lives. 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 all of the world's problems since they cannot solve them anyway. Rather, little children 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 matures into an adult, address all the difficult issues that he will need to know in order that he may protect himself when the time comes. At the same time, slowly give him responsibility in protecting himself as he shows himself trustworthy. If your teenager feels resentful at your being overprotective, he may be tempted to rebel entirely the moment he turns eighteen. This resentment is eliminated if he feels that he is the one responsible for keeping himself pure as he reaches adulthood and by this time, he should be capable of doing so.

Whether or not you prepare your kids to face the real world, they are going to be exposed to it at some point. You can try to prevent that day from coming, but the wiser parent will avoid disaster by preparing his child to face temptations without clinging to his mother's apron.

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

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, I allow my children to hold me accountable for all my words and actions. They also helped us to decide which movies and books were inappropriate for us, as a family, to watch. 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 protected environment.

Marriage

To raise children properly, it is best to have two parents. The father is usually more of the 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 against her husband. When the wife is openly thankful for her husband, naturally the children will be 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 do 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 come from broken homes and because of this, we have had a struggle trying to be good spouses, however we understand at least some of what a parent with an unbelieving spouse goes through. 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*

Christians have always understood the importance of marriage; now some child rearing experts who are beginning to also. 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

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 my children and I are.

Many parents are afraid to discipline for fear that their children will come to dislike them. However, when you train your children to obey you cheerfully and you are able to lead them cheerfully, your relationship will blossom. What child wants a parent who is always ridiculing or yelling at them for a friend?

At the risk of sounding like a [psychologist](#),⁹ 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 would cause 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 and you know what will happen to him if you don't?
- ☛ Will you justify the support you give your thirty-five year old son, while he sits at home playing video games all morning?

If you are familiar with the idea of codependency, you will probably recognize some of these bullet points. 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 and cares about her own feelings far more than she loves her child and cares about his future.

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

Home, the Center of Our Universe

*That [older women] 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.

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 believe commercial TV is offensive, if you can, stop watching it for about three months. After this fast, just start clicking through the channels and you will be amazed at how desensitized you were. You will also realize how addictive TV watching is. If your children are glued to it for over six hours every day, the bad influence will always outweigh the good.

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, the Walt Disney movies made today are not fit for children, and therefore we would not allow young children to watch them.

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 any false premise when it arises. If this seems like too much work, do not watch movies at all.

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 (when our children were young we would have [redeemed it](#)¹¹ later). We always talk about a 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.

Music

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 you perceive a child may become preoccupied with his music set limits. In the same way, you should limit headphone use if a child begins isolating himself with them. I do not believe I am overstating the problem, in ministry we have seen adults who cannot 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 the dangers and 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.

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. Internet filters may help, but they are not perfect and until they are, depending on them is dangerous. I believe that I could get at least some objectionable material past most filters (if I wanted to). Today, most children are more computer savvy than I am.

Reading

Instead of commercial TV, when our children were young, we read to them (my wife is the main reader) in the evenings and occasionally we still read together. 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.

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, local laws and other circumstances. Unfortunately, uncles and stepfathers are the number one molesters of small girls. While your children are young, be very careful that you really know whom you are leaving them.

The Church's 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 should 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, one bad experience can 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? If you have, you know that it is nearly impossible for them to see their error. Yet if we had shown these same people these same verses and how that cult will twist them, before they joined, they would easily see the cult's deception. 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

Once they are done breastfeeding, a properly trained child should be able to behave quietly beside you in the pew. By the time a child would be ready for kindergarten he should be able to sit during church. Even if he can't, God still 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.

70-75 percent of Christian youth are leaving the faith shortly after leaving [high school](#),⁷ and, 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." After looking at these and similar statistics, I believe that most Sunday schools are ineffective. Consider prayerfully whether God expects 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 children, 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 (and you are not there to protect

them), if they have a bad experience with dysfunctional peer pressure, the damage may be permanent. The damage may be even worse if your children run into a dysfunctional counselor.

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 means much 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 next 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. Of course we must have some fireworks and read the Declaration of Independence.

We do not celebrate Christmas or Easter. I could give many reasons, but the two most important are:

First, Christmas is given over to covetous practices. If Jesus was angry with religious leaders for merchandising his temple, do you think it pleases him when we merchandize His birthday?

Second, teaching children to believe in Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny 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 have tried to explain to relatives which toys are offensive, sometimes they will 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 do not allow our children to go to *Harvest festivals*, if they are imitations of, or alternatives to, Halloween.

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

Conclusion

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, now at fifty-five, 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, it 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. 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. Do not let mistakes discourage you, learn and move on. Kids are resilient. You do not have to be a perfect in order to be a good parent. I am not even close.

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. Yet 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 gave us our babies and toddlers when we were younger parents.

In writing this paper, I may have implied that the only emotion my children have ever experienced was happiness. Though they are normally 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. Our children can be the exception to, "You can't take anything with you".

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

If you, like the Berians in the Book of Acts, pick your counselors carefully and compare their advice with scripture, you can succeed. I know that someday I will stand before God, I expect that I will have to 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?"

My prayer is that this study helps many children, so that they may someday stand blameless before God.

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

End Notes

- 2 *Focus on the Family* has many good resources, however because the doctrines of 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 rough 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>
- 9 Modern psychology is [opposed to Christianity](#) and as a result can offer very little help in raising godly children.
- 10 "In 1992, Christianity Today surveyed more than one thousand of its readers. Forty percent said they'd had premarital sex. Fourteen percent said they'd had an affair. Of those who had cheated on their spouses, 75 percent were Christians at the time of the affair." 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
- 11 To redeem a toy was to replace it with one of similar value. We explained to our children why the toy was unacceptable. We bore the cost of the new toy. The unacceptable toy was never given away; rather it was ceremoniously thrown away.

Works Cited

- CBS Broadcasting Inc. (2007, January 18). *CBS 5 Poll: Majority Oppose Calif. Spanking Ban*. Retrieved May 10, 2008, from CBS 5: <http://cbs5.com/local/spanking.ban.california.2.451523.html>
- Goode, E. (2001, August 25). *Findings Give Some Support to Advocates of Spanking*. Retrieved December 21, 2007, from Project NoSpank: <http://www.nospank.net/nytimes2.htm>
- Hallowell, E. M., & Rately, J. J. (1994). *Driven to Distraction*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Harmon. (n.d.). Abusing kids to see if they are being abused! Retrieved May 10, 2008, from American Family Rights Association: http://www.familyrightsassociation.com/homeschool/abusing/to_find_abuse.html
- Lisa Whelchel, (2005) *Creative Correction: Extraordinary Ideas for Everyday Discipline*. Tyndale House Publishers Inc.
- Meek, W. (2007, February 24). *Negative Consequences of Spanking*. Retrieved May 10, 2008, from PsychCentral: <http://psychcentral.com/blog/archives/2007/02/24/negative-consequences-of-spanking/>
- Pearl, M., & Pearl, D. (1994). *To Train Up a Child*. Pleasantville: Michael and Debi Pearl.
- Winner, L. F. (2005, May 13). *Sex in the Body of Christ*. Retrieved October 06, 2009, from Christianity Today magazine: <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/may/34.28.html>

Beth-Haran Ministries

More studies are available at www.the-Gospel.org
I can be reached for questions and comments at jeffrey@the-gospel.org