



The Parent's Greatest Resource

Children are a heritage and reward from the Lord. (Psalm 127:3) Such a blessing from God! I gotta say, though, it was a good thing God told me that was true, because there were days when it sure didn't "feel" like that. Yet most of the time parenting was a joy both experientially and by faith – some moments, just by faith!

This short pamphlet is designed to give you some of the basics on the do's and don'ts of parenting. There are excellent, much longer resources that can add breadth and depth to what is taught here.¹ This pamphlet is intended to provide a quick start for growing in your understanding of your biblical responsibilities, and to offer some useful how-to's concerning these wonderful "rewards" from your own loving Father.

God, who created us, gave us the Bible – the "User's Manual," you might say. His Word gives us instructions on how to navigate parenthood. In many respects, it also has a "Troubleshooting Guide."

Does even starting to read this seem daunting? Remember this truth:

2 Peter 1:3-4

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature

What a truth! God has given you EVERYTHING YOU NEED to read this and to apply His commands and principles as a mom or dad. You must choose to believe that. He promises to help you to even WANT to be a better parent. He provides both the desire and the ability to do it. What a great God we serve!

¹ See Suggested Resources at the end of this pamphlet.

Teach Them

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Ephesians 6:4

Fathers . . . bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Proverbs 1:8

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

Ever heard anyone say, “Hey, don’t talk to them so much about the Bible. You’ll scare them off!”? Wrong! This verse makes it clear that we are to be talking lovingly about God and His promises and commands throughout the day. What we want to be especially careful to do is to talk about Him in the good times and the hard times. When the kids are being obedient, and when they are disobedient. Don’t only pull out the Word of God when they have sinned. Help them see the goodness of God in all circumstances. Doing devotionals with your children every day is a part of this (see Suggested Resources for kids’ devotionals), but it’s not just a formal devotional God has in mind. The concept here is to talk about how wonderful and powerful and good He is when you’re looking at gorgeous weather, or enjoying fun friends, or having great beach outings, when you get that raise and when you DON’T, in health and in sickness. Let them hear you talk about the goodness of God when you can see it, and when you must believe by faith alone that His promises about Himself are good and true – even though you don’t “feel” it.

If you haven’t been doing this, remember that God’s mercies are new every morning. Stop and ask forgiveness of God and your children for this omission. Explain to them what God has commanded you to do as a parent and how you are going to change and grow in this area with them – starting now. Then perhaps tell them a story about a time or two in your past when you saw the goodness of God.

Encouragement

Make a purposeful effort to praise your children when they do something well. In Revelation 2, before they are admonished the Ephesians are reminded of the good they had done. At the end of

many of Paul's letters, he enthusiastically points out the good things believers had done. Look for attitudes, words and actions for which you can encourage your children!

Correction/Discipline

Your child was created in the image of God. Such a marvelous thing to consider! But guess what? You'll never guess it – so I'll tell you. Your child is also a sinner, and folly is bound up in his heart. SURPRISE! Or perhaps you've figured that out by now. My point is – they are born sinners, and they will sin, so don't take it personally. It isn't all about you, after all. Hey, they came out that way. Brad Bigney used the phrase "vipers in diapers." Good one. Fit my kid! (And fit me as a kid, too!)

Proverbs 22:15

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child

What should we do when our children sin? That is the big question! This is an opportunity for us to explain to them the Gospel and teach the Harvest Principle.

Help them to see that their disobedience reveals their need for a Savior. Help them to see that God has given commands, and that if they disobey them God calls it sin. And that God sent His Son to die, to take the death penalty they deserve because of their sin. Explain to them that there are truths they must choose to believe about God: that Jesus is God's Son, that He came and lived a perfect life, died on the cross to pay the penalty for their own personal sins, was raised from the dead; and that He is Lord of their lives – the authority for all the decisions they make. Help them to understand that should they choose to believe these truths about God and themselves, then the penalty of their sins will be paid for forever. Help them to know they can have assurance of their being saved as they see in themselves a love for God and His Word and ways. As well, they will begin hating their sins against Jesus and desiring to turn from them no matter the cost to themselves, out of thankfulness for what Christ did on the cross for them.

When your children sin, your response should also be to teach them what is known as the "Harvest Principle":

Galatians 6:7-8

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Basically you want your kids to understand that if they “sow” (plant) the seed of a thorny weed, they should not expect a tomato to sprout out of the ground! God has set in place for our good that if a person chooses obedience, there is blessing of His choosing as reward. But if a person chooses disobedience, a level of misery will be the result. The level of misery that God brings to His children is for loving correction to help us remember not to make that ungodly decision again in the future. God is explaining that this is His economy; this is life, and this is good for our eternal souls.

As a parent, if you fail to discipline your child when he sins, you are actually teaching him that he can disobey God and “reap” peace and joy. This failure to discipline teaches that planting the seed of a thorny weed will result in beautiful, juicy, red tomatoes. That is a lie of Satan and one he successfully used on Adam and Eve. Don’t be a part of his ploys with your children.

Your loving, firm and consistent application of appropriately painful consequences for their disobedience alerts them to the fact that a change needs to happen and teaches them what they will need to know for the rest of their lives. They can either choose to learn from the loving consequences of their parents in the warmth of their home, or they will most likely undergo the harsh consequences from a world that does not love them, such as loss of friendships, school suspensions that hinder college acceptance, jail time, being beaten up by a bad group of “friends,” becoming paralyzed from drunk driving, loss of jobs, and sadly the list goes on and on.

So yes, we are required by our perfect, loving Father to bring consequences for correction, and He empowers us by the Holy Spirit in us to do so. But we need to be perfectly clear here – only God can change your children’s hearts. You cannot, and you should not think that you can. Thinking and acting as if you could is seeking to steal God’s glory, to do what God says only He can do. You can look at that as theft – trying to do what God says only He can do. His command to you is NOT to change them, but rather to be faithful to teach them about God’s character and His promises, purposes and

commands, and to lovingly correct them when they disobey with appropriately painful consequences aimed at correction.

Bringing correction is often hard as a parent, and there are several reasons why we may not do so. We may not know or fully understand God's directions and therefore think overlooking disobedience is being loving. We may be tempted by our own fleshly desire for an "easy" time, or by a desire to be liked/loved by our kids or peers who are watching, or we may be tempted by secular parenting philosophies to make excuses for the child's behavior.

To help us overcome our lack of understanding, fleshly laziness and/or temptations from the world, God gives us warnings concerning any failure to obey Him by not bringing instruction **and** loving consequences. In 1 Samuel 2:29-33 and 3:11-14 God, through Samuel, tells Eli that He is going to bring about great punishment upon Eli, because Eli knew of his sons' sins and he did nothing to restrain them. This was a terrible sin of Eli's! God also explains to Eli what Eli has done in his heart by not doing what he could to restrain his sons - "[you] *honor your sons above Me . . .*" Whoa! That is a horrible sin. This is a necessary truth for us to think about and remind ourselves of - when we don't bring consequences in response to our children's disobedience, we are putting our children before God in our hearts! God calls this idolatry.

Another great warning from God:

Ecclesiastes 8:11

*When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out,
people's hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong.*

How does this fit with parenting? Well, has this ever happened? You told your child to do something. He did not do it. Then you said, "You have until the count of 5 to do what I said!" You started your count: "ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, (maybe even FOUR AND A HALF!)," and then your child came running over to do your bidding. According to this verse, what does God (who, remember, created us and tells us how we operate) explain is happening in your child's heart while you are counting to 5? Yes, that is right. Your child is scheming evil. Now, you will not be held accountable before God for your child's disobedience, but God makes it clear you ARE responsible for *giving him the opportunity to continue to plot evil in his heart* while you count. None of us wants to hand our children opportunities to plot evil. But God says that is exactly what we do when we fail to bring appropriately painful consequences quickly.

(Since the older child has a longer memory, you can just inform him that there will be a consequence, and then deliver the consequence at a later time.)

A good way of remembering the principle is “quick and happy obedience” for younger children and “prompt, respectful obedience” for older kids. You need to teach them this principle and bring loving, corrective, appropriately painful consequences when they do not display this action and attitude.

Love your Child or Hate your Child?

You probably know this – God is love, and He teaches us what “love” is and what it looks like. He also teaches us what “hate” is and what it looks like. Here’s one of those Scriptures:

Proverbs 13:24

*Whoever spares the rod hates his son,
but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.*

Have you ever thought about failure to discipline as what God says it is – hatred toward your child? That is a conviction-bringing Scripture! Now if you are reading this pamphlet, it’s pretty clear you’re spending time learning how to love God and love your children. Failure to bring loving instruction and consequences (the rod, in this verse) is hatred toward your child.

How about when your child is angrily crying and throwing himself to the ground, or yelling, or what our culture calls a “temper tantrum” (spiritual words: sinful anger, rebellion, malice, etc.), and you decide you will use the old “distraction” technique to get him to stop?

Proverbs 19:19

*A hot-tempered person must pay the penalty;
rescue them, and you will have to do it again.*

Once rebellion has occurred, it must be corrected. Distraction is not discipline, and God explains to us that our response has been a stumbling block for this child, actually encouraging him to disobey again and again. After all, isn’t the distraction all too often a positive thing? Maybe some yummy candy, or “Let’s go do XYZ fun thing!” That is teaching the child to go to the created things for peace and/or comfort instead of to the Creator. It’s also teaching him that planting the seed of a thorny weed will result in an award-winning tomato (or an award-winning lollipop!).

A biblical counselor once told me of taking two children to the doctor's office. One child sat in the waiting room patiently while the other one chose to be impatient and display sinful anger and tears to try to get her own way and leave. The receptionist (trying to do what would help in her own way of thinking) said to the sinfully angry child, "Here, come here, you want to have this pretty balloon?" This biblical counselor said to the receptionist, "No, this child may not have a balloon because she has been disobedient to her mommy. But yes, thank you, I'll take it and give it to my other child who is being obedient and waiting patiently." A thorny weed seed grows thorny weeds. A tomato seed grows tomatoes.

Here are a couple of verses that give both hope and warning:

Proverbs 19:18

*Discipline your children, for in that there is hope;
do not be a willing party to their death.*

"A willing party to his death? What is that all about? Wait a minute, you said earlier that we are not responsible for their sins!" That is absolutely true, and there are wonderful parents whose children have made horrible choices. God makes it clear that He will not hold the parents accountable for their children's sinful choices; those were not the parents' fault. But that is not what is in view here. This verse helps us understand a warning for habitually choosing not to give consequences. "Wasn't that bad," "too busy," "too much trouble," "will just make things harder" - whatever the excuse *du jour*. The disobedient child whose parents have persistently failed to deliver instruction and appropriately painful correction has been taught that planting a thorny weed seed reaps award-winning tomatoes. He turns 16, gets behind the wheel of a car, figures there will be no harsh consequences from his parents if he drinks and drives just once. He picks up his friends and their liquor. He drinks, drives, speeds, runs into a truck and kills himself and others. None of us wants to be a party to their death. This verse gives incredible motivation for being diligent - so very consistent - in bringing a level of misery that is designed to bring correction for our children's disobedience. All the while remembering that I (the parent) cannot change them, but I can be faithful to God's commands to me as a parent. The question at the end of the day is this: "Was I seeking to be faithful?"

Proverbs 29:15

*A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom,
but a child left undisciplined disgraces its mother.*

I was a mom who gave to the count of TEN! I was a mom who, when her son was young, left him undisciplined more times than I want to think about. The disgrace described here stung me more times than I care to remember. I told myself that I wanted my child to grow in wisdom, but I did not give him the best opportunity to learn it from his mom.

I praise God that His mercies are new every day. I am so thankful for men and women who spoke into my life. When my husband and I went for parenting help when our son was four, the man asked us many questions. When it was time for us to go, he said, "So Lisa, when can we schedule for you to come back?" ME? Just ME??? Yes, God graciously forgave me (as has my son) and taught me the truth of these verses. He got me going on the right track for His glory and my good and to bring good to the life of my son for the next 14 years of his being under our authority. And by God's grace, we continued to learn, change and grow (though so imperfectly) as parents throughout.

It is never too late to turn to God in repentance for forgiveness and cleansing! And if your child is still under your authority, you can start that loving instruction and discipline afresh today! The Holy Spirit will provide the desire and the power to start right where you are for the fame of His great Name.

To close this section, let's look at this passage:

Hebrews 12: 5-11

And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,

*"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,
and do not lose heart when He rebukes you,
because the Lord disciplines the one He loves,
and He chastens everyone He accepts as His son."*

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as His children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined – and everyone undergoes discipline – then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later

on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

There were times when I did not give discipline for the very reason that I wanted a harvest of peace *for myself* in that very moment. I knew bringing instruction and a spanking was going to bring a lot of crying, and I did not want that in my life. But the truth of this verse got me turned around 180 degrees from a Lisa-ward direction to a God-ward direction. If I wanted to offer my child the opportunity for a harvest of righteousness and peace, then I needed to give an appropriately painful consequence to him. Also, from this verse I learned that it was NOT my job to give him the harvest of righteousness and peace; I could only give him the opportunity for it. The child must choose to “be trained by it.” I could bring the discipline, but he had to choose to be trained by those words and appropriately painful consequences. He had to choose to learn from it. My job was just to be faithful to my Father and my son – to love God and my son well by obeying God as a parent.

We must remember that unbelieving children cannot please God nor reap a harvest of righteousness and peace. But we can offer them the opportunity to make good habits of behavior. Then, should God save them, the habits will already be there; and at that point they will become motivated by their love of God to obey, rather than being motivated by their fear of consequences or some other selfish motivation, such as seeking to earn love from created beings or living for the approval of man.

Some How-to's

Earlier I said God is love, and He explains what love is and what it looks like. Have you ever been so overwhelmed by God's love and goodness that you just want to hug Him? Jesus says:

John 14:15

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

If you want to show God your love for Him, if you want to hug God, then in the power of the Holy Spirit, graciously and lovingly instruct and bring appropriately painful, corrective consequences to your child when he disobeys you and therefore disobeys God. Below are a few suggestions on to how to love God through your parenting.

Chores/Responsibilities

Give your children chores as soon as they are able to do even the smallest thing (feed goldfish, put water in pet's bowl, etc.), adding to

them as is appropriate to the age. Man was created to work (even before original sin). Having chores gives children an opportunity to learn to serve God and serve others and to feel a real part of the family rather than just a taker/consumer.

Rules

- Should be stated ahead of time
- Should be reasonable
- Should be definable (expectations are clear, along with deadlines)
- Should be enforceable (easy to discern whether rules are kept)

Behavior Chart Possibilities

Desired Behavior	Reward	Correction
1. Chores <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Room cleaned by breakfast • Garbage Tues, Fri 	Breakfast, sticker No garbage in room	No breakfast, room must be cleaned. No computer for a week
2. Schoolwork done <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work recorded • Work done 	Snack Acceptable TV or play, sticker	No snack No TV
3. Show love to siblings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spoke kindly • Served siblings 	Great praises from parents each time, computer time	Spanking or time out No computer time
4. General obedience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectfulness to parent in words/tone • Respectful to parents in body language 	Great praises, sticker, added computer time	Time out or spanking

Remember, your goal is to lead them to a saving knowledge of Christ. Some parenting suggestions:

- As a parent, be talking to God all day in your thoughts, asking Him to search your heart and to guide you in godly parenting.
- Talk to your children all day about how much Jesus loves them and wants the best for them, and how obedience to parents brings blessings.
- Love them well - each day praise them many more times than you correct them.

- Tell them that Jesus died on the cross to pay for our disobedience (sin).
- When discipline becomes necessary:
 - Stop yourself and pray to God to help you do it lovingly and in a way to help your child know what Jesus Christ is really like.
 - Always tell him how much you love him, that God doesn't want him to disobey, and that this consequence is designed to help him not want to do it again.
 - Then discipline [ask Six Questions (see below), administer consequences, help him identify idols of his heart.
 - Then hug him (even if he doesn't want to hug). Tell him again how much you love him, and that Jesus' dying on the cross offers us forgiveness, and that he needs to ask God to forgive him and ask you to forgive him (as well as any others he has sinned against).
 - Pray aloud for/with him.
 - Tell him what he needs to do (make right whatever he did wrong - make restitution). If he is not ready to do this immediately, he needs to stay in a boring room until he is ready to do this.
 - Once he does the above, rejoice over his seeking forgiveness, smile, hug, etc.

Six Questions to Ask when there Has Been Disobedience

1. What did you do? (As God asked Adam)
2. Was it right? (Opportunity to acknowledge sin)
3. What should you have done? (What repentance looks like)
4. What will you do next time? (Commitment to change)
5. What did you want more than pleasing God? (Identifying idolatrous lusts for confession)
6. What does God expect me as your parent to do now? ("Discipline me" comes from the child and reveals the parent's desire to please God through obedience in parenting.)

Appropriate Steps when Spanking²

Remember: Praise a lot, play a lot, pray a lot, teach a lot, and use cause/effect a lot. Everything is not a major issue (don't "major in the minors"; keep a mindset consistent with an understanding of progressive sanctification).

1. Give clear expectations ahead of time (and have the "forgetter" repeat them).
 - a. Do not give repeated warnings.
 - b. If a single warning is given, don't threaten. Rather, inform.
 - c. Once the child is accustomed to the process, give no warnings.
2. Ask: "What were you expected to do?" (Behavior and/or respectfulness in words, tone and body language.)
3. If guilt (i.e., liability, culpability) is established, send him to his room or someplace private.
 - a. En route to the room, check your self-control, review the discipline plan and pray.
 - b. Plan to remove the "log" from your eye first if needed.
4. When you are in control, go to his room.
 - a. Ask the "Six Questions" (above).
5. Instruct him: "Lean over the bed." (For a small child, leaning over the lap may be easier, especially if restraint is needed to control him.)
 - a. Determine the appropriate number of swats beforehand.
 - b. The goal is correction (positive), not punishment (revenge).
 - c. Use the paint stick, ¼" dowel rod, wooden spoon, etc.
 - d. Use the wrist (not a full arm swing) to sting, not to harm the body.
 - e. Make contact on the hindquarters.
6. Give the child an opportunity to regain composure. Then,
 - a. Assess to see if there is a "change in direction." If facial expressions, tones, words or actions do not show the fruit of repentance, another spanking may be necessary. Go back to #5.
 - b. If behavior is part of a sinful pattern, ask heart-searching questions. (Ex: "What were you trying to get out of your friends that God has already given you?" Approval? Affection? Security?)
 - c. Child should ask God and appropriate person(s) for forgiveness.
7. Practice "Put Off/ Be Transformed/Put On" by placing him in the same/similar situation.
 - a. Prepare him to respond differently, righteously.
 - b. If he does, praise him.
 - c. If he does not, the child needs more discipline. Go back to #3.
8. Show love to the child.
 - a. Hug, kiss, wipe tears away.
 - b. Remind him of the purpose of discipline.
 - c. Encourage a right attitude about discipline (Pro 1:7, 12:1, Heb 12:7-8, 11).

²Adapted from www.gracechurchhuntsville.org

God-centered Home

Children should be taught:

1. To joyfully serve others
2. To cheerfully obey parents the first time
3. To not interrupt parents who are speaking
4. To understand they will not always get their own way
5. To work their schedule around their parents' schedule
6. To have input into family decisions but not an equal vote
7. To understand that God has given their parents other responsibilities in addition to meeting their needs
8. To suffer the natural consequences of their sinful and irresponsible behavior
9. To not speak to parents as though they were peers but honor them as spiritual authorities
10. To esteem others as more important than themselves
11. To protect themselves from certain bad influences
12. To not divide parents over disciplinary issues
13. To not be more intimate with either parent than the parents are with each other.

From *Heart of Anger*, by Lou Priolo, p. 27.

How to be Obedient to your Parents

Honor your parents.

When you obey your parents, you demonstrate to them and to others that you honor them as your God-given authorities. In the same way, any disobedience to your parents is a public demonstration of dishonor.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. Eph 6:1-3

Obey your parents immediately.

Delayed obedience is a form of rebellion; thus, any hesitation to carry out instructions requires parents to respond. You may have intentions to obey your parents; however, if you do not quickly respond, it is easy to become distracted by other people or activities. You may then be offended if your parents accuse you of being disobedient. However, they would be correct, because an attitude of obedience involves acting quickly.

Do each task without murmuring.

True obedience is doing what you are told, when you are told to do it, in the way you are told to do it, and doing so cheerfully. Murmuring or complaining about having to do a task grieves the Lord, dishonors your parents and robs you of the reward that comes with obedience. God tells us: *Do all things without grumbling or disputing; that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world. Phil 2:14-15*

Seek instruction, teaching and guidance.

The ability to obey is based on knowing what to do (instruction), knowing how to do it (teaching), and knowing that you are doing it correctly (guidance). These three vital factors of training are emphasized in Ps 32:8: *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go: I will guide you with my eye.* Parents often expect obedience after providing one or two of these factors. Ask questions when you need more information about how to obey their instructions thoroughly.

Acknowledge commands and report results.

It is a blessing when a son or daughter listens to a command, then cheerfully and respectfully says, "Yes, sir" or "Yes, ma'am" and immediately sets out to do it. If you are instructed not to address your parents as "sir" or "ma'am," you can still respond by saying, "Yes, I'll do it right now, Mom (or Dad)."

After completing the job, it is wise to report the results to your parents so they can assure you that it was done in the right way. Remember that cleaning up is part of the job. (See Gal 4:1-2.)

Know when and how to make wise appeals.

If your parents ever ask you to do something which is contrary to Scripture, violates the law or moral standards, or does not seem wise to you, it would be your responsibility

respectfully and prayerfully to make an appeal. Base your appeal on the higher authority of God's Law. (See Matt 18:6.)

Pray for your parents daily.

God's command to pray for all those in authority would certainly include parents. Pray that they will have wisdom to direct the family. Also pray that God will protect them and the rest of your family from damaging influences. (See I Tim 2:1-5.)

TEN WAYS TO TEST YOUR OBEDIENCE

FIRST TEST: Do you repeatedly ask for reasons when your request is turned down?

OBEDIENCE IS ACCEPTING "NO" AS THE FINAL ANSWER.

When you make a request and are told "No," you may respectfully ask questions if your parents allow it. However, when it is made clear that your parents have given their final decision, it would be an act of disobedience to discuss the matter any further. Simply thank your authority for considering the request, and drop the subject. Trust God to work out any change of heart that may be needed. It is important to remember that there may be times that your parents cannot immediately give answers due to past experiences, conflicting circumstances, the concerns of others or direction from the Lord.

SECOND TEST: Do you stop what you are doing when given instructions?

OBEDIENCE IS ACTING IMMEDIATELY ON COMMANDS.

(No delays, no objections, no demands from you such as "Let me finish this first.")

Delayed obedience is disobedience. When your authority asks you to do something, immediately stop what you are doing and do what you were told to do. If you are working on a project that will be damaged if not finished, make your authority aware of this, and let him decide which project is the greater priority.

THIRD TEST: Do you use respectful body language when you are told to do something?

OBEDIENCE IS RESPECTFULLY RESPONDING TO REQUESTS.

(No frowns, no murmurs, no groans, no rolling of your eyes.)

A smile communicates that you desire to be respectful in carrying out the wishes of your authorities. Disrespectful facial and body language is disrespect even when you accomplish the request. Respect needs to be shown not only in completing the task, but also in word, tone and body language.

FOURTH TEST: Do you give reasons why you cannot do a job?

OBEDIENCE IS FINDING WAYS TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES.

(No negative thinking, no failure to be creative, no "I can't.")

When you are told to do a job, it's normal to think of obstacles that are in your way; but do not voice them. First ask yourself, "How can I overcome these obstacles?" Ask God

for wisdom. A desire to obey motivates creativity. Generally speaking, where there is a will, there is a way.

FIFTH TEST: Have you ever had to be reminded to do little tasks?

OBEDIENCE IS FULFILLING LITTLE COMMANDS AS WELL AS BIG ONES.

(No excuses, no frustrations, no reaction, no justification for forgetting.)

Do you need to be reminded to wipe your feet, pick up your clothes, make your bed, brush your teeth, wash the dishes or carry out garbage? A person who neglects little commands will usually overlook important details which make the difference between success and failure in a project or in life. He will also tend to be careless in his thinking, personal disciplines, neatness, speech or actions. The principle that Jesus gave is true: *He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much . . .* (Luke 16:10). On the other hand, he that is unfaithful in little will be unfaithful in much.

SIXTH TEST: Do you ever have to redo a job you did the wrong way?

OBEDIENCE IS FOLLOWING ALL THE ORDERS THE FIRST TIME.

(No assuming, no guessing, no forgetting, no self-will.)

Before carrying out a task, an obedient person will make sure that he has all the information on how to do it. He will grow in knowing what questions to ask in order to clarify instructions, and he will know when to check back with his authority to make sure he is doing the job correctly. Disobedience is adding your own will or ideas to a job when you are sure they are NOT in harmony with the precise instructions of your authority.

SEVENTH TEST: Do you ever think that a job is "stupid"?

OBEDIENCE IS DOING JOBS WITH A WILLINGNESS TO WAIT TO UNDERSTAND THEM LATER.

(No mocking, no whining, no disrespectful questioning, no evaluating.)

A former Marine recalled the days when he went through boot camp. He was ordered to dig a hole six feet square. After completing the task, he was told to fill it back up and then start another one. Later he learned that the purpose of those jobs was to teach him to obey without explanation. His life would depend on it. In battle, he would not always be given the reasons behind a command; but if he failed to obey, his life would be jeopardized, as well as the lives of those around him.

EIGHTH TEST: Do you ever ask one parent after the other said "No"?

OBEDIENCE IS NOT PITTING ONE AUTHORITY AGAINST ANOTHER.

(No scheming, no withholding of important facts, no repeated requests.)

When one parent says "No" and you ask the other parent the same question, you may get your way, but you will surely make the relationship between your parents more difficult and demonstrate the fact that you are disobedient. By rejecting the instruction of one authority, you expose yourself to the destruction that comes with rebellion.

NINTH TEST: Do you ever get distracted in your thinking by planning recreation while completing chores?

OBEDIENCE IS PUTTING ALL YOUR ENERGIES INTO A TASK.

(No halfhearted effort, no holding back energy, no daydreaming.)

God instructs us to put our whole hearts and souls into whatever we do. (See Col 3:23.) You are to work at it with all diligence, even using your thoughts to consider how you can be doing it with excellence rather than daydreaming, causing you to be careless or less than excellent in the matter. If you expend the same energy in fulfilling a job that a dedicated athlete gives to his training, the one who assigned you the job will most likely be amazed at your spirit of obedience.

TENTH TEST: Do you obey, whatever you are told to do?

OBEDIENCE IS BASED ON WHAT GOD SAYS IS TRUE AND RIGHT.

(No blind obedience, no surrender of personal responsibilities.)

Even if it's an authority who told you to do something that the Bible clearly prohibits, you are not to do it. Disobedience is violating any of God's laws, regardless of what others may tell you. If an authority asks you to do something that you believe is against God's Word, ask questions using Scripture to be sure whether it is or is not against the law of God. If it is against God's Word, you must respectfully explain that you are ultimately under God's authority and therefore must obey God rather than man.

25 Ways Parents Provoke their Children to Anger

1. Lack of marital harmony Gen 2:24
2. Establishing and maintaining a child-centered home Prov 29:15
3. Modeling sinful anger Prov 22:24-25
4. Habitually disciplining while angry Ps 38:1, Eph 4:26
5. Scolding Eph 4:29
6. Being inconsistent with discipline Eccl 8:11
 - a. Different parental standards of discipline
 - b. Vacillating on what is punishable or how severe the chastisement will be
7. Having double standards Phil 4:9
8. Being legalistic Matt 15:8-9 (biblically directed vs. derived rules)
9. Not admitting you're wrong and not asking for forgiveness Matt 5:23-24
 - a. Acknowledge that you have sinned (I was wrong)
 - b. Identify the specific sin by its biblical name (I was selfish)
 - c. Identify a biblical behavior to demonstrate your resolve to repent (I should have... next time...)
 - d. Ask for forgiveness (Will you please forgive me?)
10. Constantly finding fault Job 32:2-3, Prov 19:11
11. Parents reversing God-given roles (Wife/Husband/Parent/Child reversals) Eph 5:22-24
12. Not listening to your child's opinion or not taking his or her side of the story seriously Prov 18:3
13. Comparing your child to others 2 Cor 10:12
 - a. Compare to biblical standard of maturity demonstrated in Jesus Christ
 - b. Compare to himself: maturity today compared to various points in the past
14. Not making time "just to talk" Eccl 3:7
15. Not praising or encouraging your child Rev 2:2-4
16. Failing to keep your promises Matt 5:37
17. Chastening in front of others Matt 18:15
18. Not allowing enough freedom Luke 16:10 (as a result of their demonstrating faithfulness)
19. Allowing too much freedom Prov 29:15 (undisciplined life)
20. Mocking your child Job 17:1-2
21. Abusing him physically 1 Tim 3:3
 - a. Be certain you have all the facts
 - b. Be certain your motivation for discipline is biblical and not selfish
 - c. Be certain you are in control and not sinfully angry
22. Ridiculing or name calling to try to effect change Eph 4:29 (use biblical terms to motivate change, rather than seeking to embarrass or shame for discipline)
23. Unrealistic expectations 1 Cor 13:11 (emphasize character over achievement)
24. Practicing favoritism Luke 15:25-30
25. Child training with worldly methodologies inconsistent with God's Word Eph 6:4

Special thanks to Lou Priolo for his teaching on provoking children. He is the author of *The Heart of Anger*, an excellent book on how to parent biblically.

Repenting from Provoking Children to Anger

1. Identify the specific ways you have been provoking your child to anger: read Eph 6:4.
2. Confess these sins to God: read 1 John 1:9.
3. Ask your child's forgiveness for your sins against him: read Acts 24:16; review point 9 from "25 Ways" above.
4. Develop a plan with your child's assistance to replace those sinful behaviors with the biblical alternatives: read Prov 28:13.
5. Consider specific ways you can provoke your children to love and good works: read Heb 10:24.

Wrapping Up

We have an all-powerful, loving and all-wise God who is our Father. All His commands are pure and perfect and good for us and for our children. He has promised to give us all we need to fulfill His commands to us as parents. Let's be careful to repent when we think that we can come up with some parenting philosophy that could be "better" than God's perfect plan.

"Lord, please help us to hungrily go to your Word daily for sustenance and guidance. Help us to believe it is true and to appropriate it faithfully. Thank you for sending your Son to save us from all the times we have sinned against you as parents. Thank you for the opportunity to confess to you! Thank you for cleansing us! Thank you for your promise you will use even our sins to help us become more like your Son! That is amazing grace! We want to parent for your glory. Please help us. And thank you for promising you always will!"

Suggested Resources

Idolatry, A Dangerous Exchange, Lisa Anderson, Hope Center, Christian Family Chapel. Free resource. Contact TonyA@cfcjax.com.

Family Devotionals

Sticky Situations: 365 Devotions for Kids and Families, Betsy Schmitt. (8-12 year olds)

Sticky Situations 2: 365 Devotions for Kids and Families, Betsy Schmitt. (6-10 year olds)

Long Story Short: Ten-Minute Devotions to Draw Your Family to God, Marty Machowski. (All ages)

Parenting Children in the Home

The Faithful Parent, A Biblical Guide to Raising a Family, Martha Peace and Stuart Scott. One of the great benefits of this book is that it includes a step-by-step look at different challenges at various ages and how to address them, such as how young to start disciplining.

The Heart of Anger, Lou Priolo. This is the resource I assign most frequently during the counseling process when parenting is the challenge.

When Good Kids Make Bad Choices, Elyse Fitzpatrick, Jim Newheiser, Laura Hendrickson. (Includes a section by an MD about psychotropic medications and children) This book is very helpful for the challenges of extremely rebellious middle school or high school children when difficult decisions must be made.

Age of Opportunity, Paul David Tripp. This resource is very helpful for the heart issues of the parent of teenagers.

Parenting Adult Children

Heartbroken, Shirley Elliott. This book offers excellent help for the parent's own heart's response to God concerning adult children who are not walking with the Lord.

You Never Stop Being a Parent, Elyse Fitzpatrick, Jim Newheiser. This excellent book gives practical "how-to's" concerning relating to adult children who are not walking with the Lord.



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