

Children and Authority

Principles for Biblical Parenting

By

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While it is essential to acknowledge that only the Holy Spirit is able to convict and convert a child's heart to a saving faith in Christ, the parent must understand that he or she usually has more to do with forming the child's attitudes toward God and His authority than any other, single influence.

The parent who truly loves his child will make every effort to ensure that he or she learns God's principles for parenting and consistently and carefully applies them for the sake of the child's eternal well being.

The Author

INTRODUCTION

We live in a time of significant social upheaval as a result of our culture's base of traditional values being replaced by the politically correct notion that there is no absolute standard of truth. Nowhere do we see evidence of this any more than in our youth. They are one of the most troubled generations in our national history, with their Nihilistic value system leaving them drifting in a sense of purposelessness. For many, their greatest goal in life is to live for immediate gratification without any purposeful sense of vision or direction.

Sadly, we see little difference between the values of the general culture and those of a significant percentage of our Christian youth. One would think that the traditional values of the church would make more of a difference. But somewhere there has been a disconnect: many Christian parents and a large segment of church leadership have somewhere missed the boat when it comes to successfully imparting traditional faith and values to the next generation. Even as early as the mid-twentieth century, theologian and philosopher Frances Schaeffer observed that the children of evangelicals were ill prepared to stand on their own in the face of the growing pressures of secular culture.

There are certainly any number of factors that explain the failure of the evangelical community regarding its children. In this booklet, I would like to consider what I believe to be one of these primary factors — the lack of decisive, authoritative leadership that should be provided by parents. Where once parents were unapologetically and boldly authoritative, providing crucial leadership for their children, now they seem intimidated by the politically correct mindset that parents should somehow treat children as miniature adults. Parents are afraid that they will alienate their children if they are heavy handed or stifle their creativity if they are too rigid. And while an authoritative mindset can certainly be oppressive and counter-productive (authoritarianism), perhaps we have thrown the baby out with the bathwater in buying in to many of the prevailing, permissive parenting theories popular in our contemporary culture.

If our children were mature enough to penetrate through the fog of their own culturally influenced mindset of “being liberated” and could articulate their frustrations, they might ask, “Where are the adults who are willing to courageously step forward and take charge, showing us the way as bold and decisive role models?” Or as author Wendy Shalit observes, our children, rather than wanting more freedom, are actually “dying for someone to kiss us goodnight, to care enough to tell us what the right thing to do is.” In other words, “Is there anyone in charge who can show the way?”

This booklet is certainly not intended to address the full spectrum of parenting issues. There are many aspects to successful parenting which have been quite thoroughly addressed by numerous authors. Rather, I would like to address as simply and clearly as possible what I consider to be a fundamental of parenting often not addressed by other authors: *teaching responsibility and self-control to our children through lovingly but firmly administered external rules and standards*. We have been sold a bill of goods by our culture that such a traditional approach stifles the child's creativity and hinders his development as a healthy individual. But one must ask: are the children of today more liberated, self-fulfilled, well-adjusted and secure than the children who were products of traditional homes from previous generations where parents were “authoritative?” One does not have to be a social scientist to see that something is sadly lacking in modern parenting techniques compared to the fruit borne in previous generations.

It should not take the reader long to read through this simple presentation. I will address primarily the one issue of why the simple but vital authority role of the parent is essential to developing not only a healthy child, but one who is prepared to enter into a fruitful relationship with God and with society.

Obviously, there are other facets of parenting that are needed to balance out what is presented here. The reader can go to the *Bible* and to various parenting manuals to get that balance. I have decided to focus on this one issue because, in my thirty-five plus years as a parent and grandparent, pastor, and educator, I see this issue as being a root problem in today's parenting culture.

Discussion questions are included at the end of the booklet. Taking time to look up the *Bible* references and thinking through these questions will help cement these concepts in the reader's mind. They also will be helpful if this booklet is used as a small group study.

As a concluding thought, let me make one vital qualifying remark. While this booklet deals primarily with a single parenting issue—the need for the parent to be an authoritative role model—I acknowledge and heartily emphasize that *the first priority and principle of training a child is that it must be done in the context of relational love*. Without such relationship with the parents, where a child clearly understands and senses a safe and secure environment of warm, gentle love and unqualified acceptance, all other parenting “techniques” will fall short. The reader must clearly understand that everything that follows is sadly lacking if such a relationship rooted in such love does not exist between the parent and child.

May God help the Christian community to reclaim its God given mandate to parent children in a way that will prepare them to serve His will and purposes throughout their lives.

SECTION I

THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE: AUTHORITY

*Many refuse to accept the reality of a personal God
because they are unwilling to submit to His authority.*

Kurt Bruner

Our satisfaction lies in submission to the divine embrace.

Jan Van Ruysbroeck

*A man is not far from the gates of heaven when he is fully
submissive to the Lord's will.*

C. H. Spurgeon

Before we think about specific parenting methods, it is vital that we understand the rationale behind the authoritative parenting model presented in the *Bible*. One who is uninterested or unwilling to make the effort in understanding the rationale behind why he parents he does will never be effective in accomplishing his goal. For that reason, we need to consider several fundamental principles concerning God and how we relate to Him in a healthy manner. In each case, we will apply these principles in a relevant way to how we parent our children.

The starting point is, of course, the existence of God. His Being is the ultimate reality, in that all of existence is derived from Him. Another way to say it is that He is the ultimate Absolute. All power and authority are resident in Him, and He is the measure and standard for all truth. Obviously, He would not be God if He were not the infinite, transcendent Being who stands apart from and is above all else, including man. Or, we could say it like this: no finite, particular individual (man) or thing can have any meaning apart from an infinite, absolute reference point. God alone is this infinite and absolute Being. All individual men and women find meaning and purpose in life only in context of a proper relationship with God.

In this context, we may conclude that our existence must be centered around the reality of His authority. Authority as it is expressed in God and our relation to it is the ultimate of all human issues. *If we are at odds with this ultimate Authority, we can expect our lives to be fraught with corresponding problems.*

Our relation to the authority of God is put into more relevant terms when we understand the *Genesis* account of man as created in the image of God. Part of what it means to be created in His image is the fact that we *are responsible, moral* beings who reflect this same nature in God. By moral, we mean simply that we are not pre-programmed or pre-determined by God to act in a certain way when it comes to moral issues. Rather, we are truly free in making our own choices.

The word that must always go hand in hand with the notion of being moral is “responsible,” which means to be held accountable by a higher authority for one’s choices. If one were a pre-determined, programmed being, he could not reasonably be held responsible for that which he was not free to choose. Thus, if one is to be held responsible, then he must be truly moral (free to choose).

The most fundamental level of man’s responsibility is rooted in how he responds to the authority of God. This is best illustrated by the *Genesis 3* account of the fall of man into sin. The essence of Adam’s and Eve’s sin was their rejection of God by disobeying His command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. By rejecting His command, they rejected and placed themselves above God’s authority.

As a result of their disobedience, there were quite logical, natural consequences. The most fundamental consequence was that Adam and Eve became alienated from God. After all, their rejection of His command was an overt rejection of His authority.¹ In addition to being cast away from God’s intimate presence, death and disease were introduced into the human race, the natural creation suffered corruption, and mankind’s subsequent self-centeredness became the basis for racism, wars, murder, strife, envy, jealousy, and all other forms of evil known throughout mankind’s less than glorious history. It would be difficult to think of a more profound illustration than Adam’s and Eve’s sin to show *that man is a truly moral being who is responsible for the choices he makes*. Those choices have very real consequences.

¹As a side note, we can observe that this is the root of all immoral attitudes and actions: moral beings who reject the authority of God are acting immorally because they are rejecting the ultimate moral being and His will.

Happily for man, God in His love sent His Son Jesus Christ to provide a means of redemption in order to restore man to right relationship with God. But it is important to understand that God did not simply overrule Adam's and Eve's choice to reject His *authority or the consequences of that choice*. In Christ Jesus, man is faced with yet another moral choice – really the same choice in principle as faced by Adam and Eve, except in somewhat different circumstances. The sons and daughters of Adam and Eve may accept Jesus Christ on God's terms as God's provision for man's salvation and thus be restored to right relationship with God; or they may maintain Adam's and Eve's rejection of God by choosing not to accept Jesus Christ as God's exclusive means of salvation. It is what we might call man's ultimate moral decision in relation to God's authority. *Either way he chooses, man remains a moral being and will live with the consequences of his choice as a responsible being*. God does not force His solution down man's throat; it remains still for man to choose. Thus, how man relates to the authority of God remains the ultimate human issue.

Let us consider now how these simple, but profound theological truths must be applied practically by parents in the training of their children.

SECTION II

THE HIGHEST PRIORITY: TRAINING CHILDREN TO UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLE OF AUTHORITY

He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.

John 14:21 NAS

The imposition of rules and behavioral standards for our children is a strategic element in helping to prepare their hearts to enter into a vital relationship with Christ.

If what has been stated thus far is true, then we can quickly recognize why *teaching children to properly relate to authority is perhaps the most important goal of parenting*. Obviously, there are other important truths. Children must understand the concepts of grace, mercy, forgiveness and other virtues related to the character of God and how we relate to Him. But if one understands the fundamental principle of God as the ultimate Absolute, then he must also understand that the concept of God's authority is the cornerstone undergirding all other concepts of grace and virtue. If parents are not successful at this fundamental level of teaching authority, they will not be completely successful at any level.

There are different ways that the parent may teach his children about God's authority. Unquestionably, the most important means is through the parents' example as role models. If Dad and Mom model humble submission and obedience to God's authority, their actions will speak far more effectively than all their combined words and teachings. Parental example is the most important level of teaching this vital concept.

But another important means to teach proper respect and obedience for God's authority is through the use of external standards and rules that the parents determine are reasonable and important to the smooth and harmonious function of their family. *The important principle is to recognize that these external standards and rules established by the parents represent authority to the child in a form in which he can understand and relate at an experiential level.*

We see this principle illustrated by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians, where he refers to the Law as a "tutor" or "child-conductor," in order to lead ("conduct") one to Christ (*Gal. 3:24*). Put simply, the Law, as given through Moses, was a standard of righteousness understandable in human terms, but to which man could not perfectly attain. The Law revealed the deficiencies that were a function of man's sin nature. As Paul states in Romans 3:20, "... through the Law comes the knowledge of sin." If man does not have this framework for understanding his sin, he would not perceive his need for God's grace and forgiveness, and he would have no reason to come to Christ.

Paul develops this theme in Galatians 4, where he refers to us as heirs who are "under guardians and managers until the date set by the father" to receive their inheritance (*Gal. 4:1-2*). In the same way, says Paul, "so also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world," until "the fullness of God's time came" and Jesus Christ was revealed (*Gal. 4:3-4*). In other words, it was through the guardianship and management of the external Law of Moses that man had a context – a reference point – to understand his sin and need for God. And when Jesus Christ was revealed – in "the fullness of God's time" – it was in the context of this same Law that man understood his need for Christ and His redemptive work.

Herein lies a vital principle which we must apply to the raising of our children: *the imposition of rules and behavioral standards for our children is a strategic element in helping to prepare their hearts to enter into a vital relationship with Christ*. It is through an external set of rules and standards understandable to the child that he first learns about and experiences the reality of authority and his need to properly relate to it. How the parent manages the child in this context has everything to do with how the child will later relate to God when he comes of age. If not taught the proper respect and relation to authority as a child, then he will likely have a deficient attitude later in life toward God and His final authority.

If we think back to the previous section where we developed our simple theology of God's authority and our need to be properly related to Him, we see how parents are able, through their parental authority, to teach the child the fundamental elements necessary to properly relate to God. Through external rules and standards, parents are able to teach the child the following:

1. There exists a higher authority to which the child needs to submit. The child cannot be his own highest authority and, at the same time, harmoniously exist with any form of authority derived legitimately from God (i.e. parents, teachers, civil authorities, etc.).
2. The child is a moral being, free to make his own choices, but responsible for the natural consequences of those choices. These choices are quite real, with the ultimate choice being one's acceptance or rejection of God and the ultimate consequence of heaven or hell. For the child to learn that he is responsible is one of the most important lessons he will ever comprehend.
3. The exercise of self-control over the child's sinful impulses is a necessary and possible part of his healthy character development. It is vital that he learn to deny his sinful impulses out of deference to God. Self-control goes hand in hand with the reality of being responsible.
4. Submission to godly authority is always in the child's best interests, while willful rejection of such authority is always ultimately harmful. God's will as expressed through His legitimate authority and the individual's best interests are always synonymous. No matter what the child may need to surrender in deference to God's authority, the blessings he will receive are always greater.

There are certainly other principles which can and should be taught by the parents through training their children under the proper management of external rules and standards. But if these fundamental lessons as listed above are ingrained in the child, then a healthy foundation is being established as a basis for all other desirable virtues.

We will examine some practical ways that these principles can be effectively taught by parents. Before we do, let us consider one of the most common objections by parents to an emphasis on teaching their children through the structure of external rules and standards.

SECTION III

RULES AND STANDARDS: LEGALISTIC OR LEGITIMATE?

For parents to take the position that external rules and standards are legalistic is to misunderstand the true nature of grace and is to miss one of the most important means by which we can teach our children about authority.

A common misconception among some is that because of God's grace, it is unnecessary for Christians to be under any system of external government or law. This mentality is rooted in the *Romans 8* doctrine that we have been set free from the Law through the grace of God (*Romans 8:2*). Furthermore, we have been given the Spirit of God, and that same Spirit leads us in a way that makes adherence to any external law unnecessary (*Romans 8:3-4*). These and similar scriptures are taken to mean that any form of external rule or law for the believer is, therefore, legalistic.

But it is vital to understand that the existence of laws, rules or policies designed to regulate and govern behavior are not to be confused with legalism. Let us briefly define the differences between the two.

In a Biblical context, legalism is the attempt by man to earn his acceptance and salvation with God through his own human effort to live up to the letter of God's Law. The mentality of the Pharisees so often encountered by Christ as recorded in the four Gospels was one of basing their righteousness and right standing with God on their ability to adhere to the Law of Moses. And without exception, Christ directed His most severe condemnation toward those with this legalistic mentality. Paul and the other apostles also condemned this legalistic mindset in the early church when a group of Jews tried to establish a doctrine that based man's salvation on *both* the work of Christ *and* the keeping of the Jewish Law (*Acts 15:1-11; Galatians 2:16*). Whenever this mentality surfaced, the church fathers thoroughly and decisively refuted and rejected it. The New Testament makes it quite clear that any doctrine of salvation based to any degree on man's works is unacceptable to God.

Another, perhaps more subtle, form of legalism is defined in *Webster's Third International Dictionary*:

An often excessive reliance on legal principles and practices especially as interpreted literally. An adherence to the letter as distinguished from the spirit of the law.

In this context, a legalist is one who is so focused on the technicalities of the law that he misses its spirit – its general intent. For example, Jesus was criticized by the Pharisees for allowing His disciples to satisfy their hunger by gleaning some grain from a wheat field on the Sabbath (*Matthew 12:1-8*). The spirit behind the law against labor on the Sabbath was intended to give the people a day of rest from their daily toils. For the disciples to satisfy their immediate hunger by gleaning some grain did not violate the spirit of this law. But the Pharisees' condemnation of Jesus' disciples revealed their legalistic mindset, which was focused more on technicalities than maintaining the spirit of intent. Of this mindset the apostle Paul wrote, "...for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (*2 Cor. 3:6*). The technicalities – the letter of the law – squeeze the life and benefit out of its intent.

But we must not confuse either of these forms of legalism with the necessary and constructive use of external standards and rules. All healthy cultures depend upon conformity to common laws and standards if they are to maintain orderliness and avoid anarchy. Even the New Testament sets forth various rules and guidelines to regulate the life of the church. Paul gives instructions for serving the Lord's Supper (*I Cor. 11:17-34*), conducting church meetings (*I Cor. 14*), selecting church leaders (*I Tim. 3*), maintaining the proper roles of men and women (*I Cor. 11, I Tim. 2*), regulating divorce (*I Cor. 7*), providing for modest deportment in dress and actions (*I Peter 3:3-5; I Tim 2:9-10*), ministering to the poor (*II Cor. 8-9*), and various other practical and moral issues. If all Christians were in perfect communion with God, and the Spirit of God's law was perfectly inscribed in their hearts, external rules and guidelines would be unnecessary. But Paul and the other New Testament authors were quite aware of the fact that the "perfect" has not fully been realized in terms of the human heart. Even though saved by grace, that same grace did not eliminate the necessity of government and law in the life of the New Testament church.

Furthermore, when it comes to training our children, it is through external standards and rules that they are best introduced to the concept of authority and the most fundamental and vital lesson which they must learn: the submission of their will to that same authority. For parents to take the position that external rules and standards are legalistic is to misunderstand the true nature of grace and to miss one of the most important means by which we can teach our children about authority.

Before discussing some practical applications in how we teach authority to children, let us emphasize a point made above: submission to godly authority is always in the child's best interests and is essential to his salvation.

SECTION IV

SUBMISSION TO AUTHORITY

*As self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children insures their
after wretchedness and faithlessness. . . . No indulgence of it can be
trivial, no denial unprofitable.*

Susannah Wesley

As loving parents, it is our duty to train our children to bring their self-centered willfulness under submission to reasonable authority. We do not do this because we enjoy "lording" it over our children, but because we know it is for their ultimate welfare. Let us consider the practical example of a parent who establishes the rule that his son is not to leave the front yard or enter onto the street under any circumstances, unless with one of his parents. From the parental perspective, the reason for this rule is obvious: it is designed for the child's ultimate safety and well-being.

However, from the child's limited and immature perspective, he may not understand why he is not to leave the front yard and why he cannot go onto the street. He cannot yet conceptualize the awful reality of being run over by a car and his life being prematurely ended. So when he sees the family pet crossing the street, his impulsive tendency may be to follow after it, and he likely will do so unless he has been thoroughly trained by his parents to defer his will to theirs.

In this example, the child's welfare depends upon how fully he submits to the authority of his parents. Frankly, the child is incapable of knowing what is in his best interests because of his limited perspective. *Thus, his submission to authority must not be based so much on his understanding as much as the training given by his parents along with his respect for their word.* If properly trained, even when his favorite pet runs into the road, he is able to exercise adequate self-control in order to overcome his impulse to chase after it because his submission to his parents' authority is stronger than his urge to run into the road. In this example, his submission to authority is actually a life or death matter. *Thus, we see how serious a matter it is for the parents to be quite thorough in training their child in immediate and unqualified obedience.*

Let us apply this principle to the child's ultimate well-being in relation to God by considering the words of Susannah Wesley, mother of the famous evangelists John and Charles Wesley:

As self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children insures their after wretchedness and faithlessness. Whatever checks and mortifies (self-will), promotes their future happiness and piety. This is still more evident if we further consider that Christianity is nothing less than doing the will of God, and not our own; that the one grand impediment to our temporal and eternal happiness being this self-will. *No indulgence of it can be trivial, no denial unprofitable.*

Wesley raises the stakes, so to speak, by observing that training children to respect and obey authority is essential for not only their temporal well-being, but, more importantly, for preparing them to properly relate to God in an eternal context. It is their eternal destiny which is at stake rather than merely their health and welfare in this life. *Her observation that the failure to check and restrain self-will in the child may result in their eternal misery is a thought that should sober any parent.*

Furthermore, parents must understand that "no indulgence" of self-will in the child should be considered trivial. That is, if the parent is indulgent of the child's disobedience to authority in the everyday affairs of life, the child will learn conditional respect and obedience. Then, when it comes to running out in the street or submitting to God's ultimate authority, his conditional obedience may result in tragedy or, worse, in an eternal "wretchedness" as a result of not fully yielding self-will to God. It is unchecked self-will that is the basis of all sin and misery, and any parent who does not teach the child to unconditionally submit that self-will to a higher authority is actually acting in an unloving manner toward that child. *Today's parenting styles that equate permissiveness with grace and mercy in the name of love are actually a contradiction in terms.*

Before we move into the practical arena of application, let us sum up some important thoughts.

God exists as the ultimate Absolute. Man's eternal welfare and happiness depends on his proper relationship to the absolute authority of God. *It is through the use of external rules and standards firmly and consistently enforced by the parents that the child experiences and develops this healthy concept of authority.* Apart from thorough and consistent training, the child will likely have a very deficient concept of God and the nature of His authority, even if later in life he turns to God. How he is raised as a child has everything to do with the characteristics of how he relates to God later in life. Indeed, external rules (the Law) not only help the child understand his sin nature and need for Christ, but also teach him to properly relate to the authority of God and His will for the child's life. Living for the will of God (in harmony with the authority of God) represents the child's temporal happiness *and* ultimate, eternal well-being.

SECTION V

PRINCIPLES IN TRAINING THE CHILD TO SUBMIT TO AUTHORITY

*All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful,
but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it,
afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*

Hebrews 12:11 NAS

*God has no pleasure in afflicting us, but He will not keep back even the most painful chastisement if He
can but thereby guide His beloved child to come home and abide in the Beloved Son.*

Andrew Murray

Following are some vital principles in training the child to properly relate to authority along with some of the deficiencies common to this present age of permissive parenting.

Definition and Consistency

External rules and standards must be articulated in simple language understandable at the child's level of cognition and development. Nothing is more ludicrous than to see a parents forcefully reasoning with a toddler about why his behavior was unacceptable. The child may be shaking his head in agreement, not because he understands the reasons, but because he is afraid of the consequences if he does not agree!

For example, a two year old does not need an extensive explanation as to why he is not to touch the hot stove. A simple, definitive "NO" is all that is needed at this stage. It should be enough for the child that the parents so commanded.

As children grow older, external rules and standards can be expanded, but they should always be kept as simple as possible in order to minimize misunderstanding. Then, when the child uses the excuse, "But I didn't understand!" the parents can have confidence that such a response is merely a smokescreen used by the child to cover over his disobedience or lack of responsibility.

Clear-cut definition of rules and standards minimizes confusion and gives the child a secure sense of what is expected. Contemporary educational theory suggests that rules and structure stifles and inhibits a child's creativity. But many parents and educators have experienced just the opposite. When a child's world is structured and he knows what is expected, he is actually more secure, happier, and able to grow in his creativity and personal development.

The consistent administration of appropriate consequences goes hand in hand with the definition of rules and standards. *Perhaps the most common and counter-productive parenting deficiency is a lack of consistent follow through by the parent when the child is disobedient, disrespectful, or irresponsible.* If a parent has given a definition in the form of a rule, but fails to consistently enforce that rule, then the child is inadvertently being taught that conditional obedience to authority is acceptable. This is a quite dangerous concept, in that the *Bible* calls for us to unconditionally obey God's authority (*John 14:21, 23-24*).

We might say that conditional obedience is no obedience at all. This is why, in the context of training our children to obey God, Susannah Wesley observed that "no indulgence of it (self-will) can be trivial, no denial unprofitable." We can make the simple observation that disobedience to legitimate authority always results in negative consequences. God was not inconsistent with Adam and Eve by overlooking their transgression, giving them three warnings, and finally saying, "This time I really mean it!"

If because of inconvenience or a lack of nerve a parent fails to consistently enforce any aspect of his or her defined rules and standards, he or she is inadvertently teaching the child that conditional obedience is acceptable. This cannot be pleasing to God and will not be in the child's ultimate interests.

Consequences Used to Teach Responsibility and Self-Control

Wise parents will understand that a child is taught responsibility by allowing him to experience the reality of consequences consistent with the nature of his choices. Good, responsible choices

(responses) made by the child in relation to parental authority are praised and the child enjoys the benefits of obedience. Thus, there is an important role for positive reinforcements. On the other hand, it is equally important for the child to consistently experience the negative consequences of his inappropriate, irresponsible choices.

For the two year old who disobeys his parents and touches the hot stove, the reality of consequence – burning his hand – is a painful but effective teacher of why he should obey his parents' word. He will not touch the stove again! This illustration reinforces an important point: *timely and adequate consequences are the best reality teachers to the child of the fact that he is responsible for his actions.*

Many consequences are the natural result of the child's disobedient or irresponsible choices. For example, touching the hot stove, pulling the dog's tail, or sticking his hand into the fan will generally give the immediate and adequate level of consequence that reinforce to the child the wisdom of exercising self-control so as not to repeat such choices. But these are what we might call natural consequences.

The same principle should apply when the child willfully disobeys the external rules and standards established by the parents. When the parents' response is consistently decisive and the consequences adequate, the child will learn that his self-will and own way is not worth the unpleasantness resulting from his actions.

Consequences should be as appropriate to the "offense" as possible. For willful disobedience, spanking is a Biblical form of discipline that is especially effective for younger children. If administered in a firm but loving manner, spanking communicates through the child's first hand experience the fact that he is accountable to authority and that his disobedient actions will have unpleasant and unacceptable consequences. In a very real sense, spanking for disobedience is one of a parent's most loving acts, in that it is ingraining in the child the concept of someday having to answer to the ultimate authority – God – for his choices in life. It also helps create a healthy fear and respect for godly authority. It needs to be emphasized that *there is a very real sense in which the child, in the context of a loving relationship with his parents, should also have a healthy fear and respect for their authority.*

Many today have bought into the mentality that spanking is a form of child abuse. Certainly, there are abusive parents who hit their children or discipline in anger. Such ill-treatment does not fit the Biblical model and is never acceptable behavior for the parent. But such abuse must not be confused with a Biblical form of corporeal punishment administered lovingly and constructively. For those parents who are uneasy about spanking their children or who downright disagree with this practice, they are encouraged to read a good book that presents the proper, Biblical model (a number of which are listed in the bibliography).

There are also many other forms of consequences that can be effective with children and teens. The general principle is to discover consequences that are linked with the nature of the offense. For example, a child who does not put away his toys as directed may lose his privilege to play with them for a day or two. A child who is "whiney" may be put to bed for thirty minutes or until he chooses to change his attitude. A teenager who does not properly complete his chores may lose his privilege to go out with his friends to the Saturday afternoon movie or be given additional chores. Good books have been written which contain more specific suggestions for parents (a number of these are also listed in the bibliography). What is important is that parents define the expectations for the child and then consistently and firmly administer appropriate consequences when the child disobeys or is irresponsible.

If a child continually repeats the same offense, it is a sure indication, with rare exception, that the consequences are inadequate or being inconsistently administered. For example, a parent who spansks

may find that her child, especially if he is strong willed, will decide that the spanking is not unpleasant enough to extinguish or minimize the disobedient behavior or attitude. Self-will is deeply engrained (this cannot be overemphasized!), and the parent must have the courage to use whatever level of consequence (within reason) is necessary to be effective. If spanking, the amount and force may need to be increased until the child's willfulness is broken. The same is true in principle with any other form of discipline utilized by the parent. If the discipline is inadequate, the child may actually become more defiant as a result of feeling that the authority is not to be feared or respected. It is at this point that parents must not lose courage or feel that they are being abusive. *If Dad and Mom lose the battle of wills with the child, they will be in for a long and unpleasant family life.* As the Proverb states, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother" (*Prov. 29:15*).

Much contemporary parenting theory would suggest that such an approach of inflicting unpleasant consequences is really quite cruel and harmful to the child's psychological development. But if the child is truly a moral being, then we could respond by saying that to not teach him the reality that he is a responsible being through the application of unpleasant consequences is really that which is ultimately unloving and abusive. Furthermore, the permissive parenting crowd has had its day, and the fruit of their methods is abundantly and sadly evident. What is most distressing is to see so many Christian parents buying into such a mentality. Indeed, if we really love the child, we will agree with Wesley's observation that "... whatever checks and mortifies (self-will), promotes their future happiness and piety." Thus, teaching the child to restrain his impulsive self-will in deference to godly authority is always the most loving position that can be taken by the parent.

Some would also argue that the application of negative consequences (punishment) is a form of coercion that is teaching the child that "might is right." Certainly, if parents are arbitrary and unreasonable, their yelling and threatening and punishing their children would fit this category of abusiveness. But such a model is not Biblical. Rather, the Biblical model is one of a loving, reasonable parent who disciplines, not in anger, but in a consistently firm manner that engenders love for the parents but, at the same time, a healthy fear of the consequences that follow disobedience and irresponsibility. This represents to the child the nature of our heavenly Father, who loves us so much that He gave His Son to die for us on the cross, yet whom we should fear if we go against His authority.

It cannot be overemphasized that such lessons are among the most important we can give our children. To not be successful at this level of parenting is to fail in one of the most fundamental aspects of what it means to be a godly parent.

Understanding Not a Prerequisite to Obedience

One of the common mistakes made by parents is the tendency to depend more upon reasoning with the child rather than emphasizing reality training. *A child must be quickly taught that his obedience is not contingent upon his understanding.* Rather, he must learn to trust that godly authority always has his best interests at heart, even when he does not understand the "why" behind the rule.

The parent who tries to reason with his child as the primary basis for teaching obedience and responsibility is starting at the wrong place. If satisfying the child's understanding is a prerequisite to his obedience, then the child is being allowed to place himself on the same level as the parent. Such a mentality flies in the face of the nature of true authority. Furthermore, reasoning can never replace the "reality training" of consequences in the child's experience as the primary teacher of obedience.

Nothing is more frustrating than to observe a parent trying to convince a child to obey by reasoning with him. Often times, the parent is actually speaking in reasonable terms that the child, at his

level of development, is not even capable of understanding. Nevertheless, the parent finds himself actually negotiating for the child's obedience.

Adam and Eve did not understand the "why" behind God's command that they should not eat from the tree. The fact that it was God who gave the command was, in itself, adequate reason for them to obey. God did not deem it necessary to reason with Adam and Eve in order to bring them to a place of understanding the rationale behind His restrictive command. Frankly, they could not have understood what was at stake because of their innocence and limited experience.

The four year old whose parents direct him not to go into the street does not need to understand the rationale behind the command; he simply needs to obey it because his parents have so directed. Frankly, he cannot understand the rationale behind the restrictive command simply because of his developmental immaturity.

The nature of authority, if it is legitimate authority, is that it always has the best interests at heart of those for whom it is responsible. Those in positions of authority, such as parents, are usually in a better place to decide which rules and standards are in the best interests of those being led. Thus, one of the most important lessons for the child is to learn to obey, even when he does not understand the rationale behind the rule or standard.

The fundamental issue at stake is the tendency for the child to pit his will and judgment against that of the legitimate authority. If he does not understand the "why" for the rule, he naturally tends to want his own way. Thus, the parents must train the child to obey even when he does not understand. The illustration of Adam and Eve makes it abundantly clear why this is such an important principle. Frankly, it was the "reasoning" of the serpent questioning God's authority that got Adam and Eve into trouble in the first place.

As the child grows older and is more capable of understanding, it may be constructive for the parent to share the rationale for the rule or standard. Such understanding helps the more mature child appreciate the fact that godly authority is always acting in a loving manner, with his or her best interests at heart. But this child must already have been trained to obey without understanding. Sharing the rationale with him is only effective when he has already learned unconditional obedience.

Argument versus Appeal

When the child argues with the parents concerning a rule or standard, it is an indication of an insubordinate attitude. *Argument is the child seeking to elevate his own will and reason to the same level as that of the parents.* And when the parent engages in argument, he has already lost the battle, so to speak, by stepping down from her position of authority and placing herself at the same level as the child. This is a fundamental mistake on the part of the authority figure, regardless of the context.

An argumentative spirit must be treated the same as disobedience and disrespect, no matter the child's age. Parents who do not allow this kind of attitude in the younger child will reap the benefits as the child reaches his teenage years. On the other hand, the child who gets away with such an attitude in his younger years becomes the difficult and unpleasant teenager so common in contemporary culture.

If the child begins to argue, the parent should initiate immediate and decisive consequences, treating argument the same as outright disobedience. Again, referring to Wesley's statement, whatever checks self-will in the child is promoting his ultimate happiness in relation to the ultimate authority of God.

There is another facet related to this issue that should be noted. After the young child has been taught to obey unconditionally, without argument, it is constructive to teach him to learn how to respectfully appeal to authority when he feels there is an injustice or wrong. All earthly authority is imperfect, including parents. As the child grows older and more mature, he should be taught to approach authority to present his question or concern in a respectful manner. Reasonable authority, including the parents, will listen carefully to concerns expressed in such an attitude and will reconsider rules and/or decisions if there is good reason for so doing. This is an important skill to be learned by young people in that it will serve them well in their relationship to all forms of authority with which they will relate throughout their lives. There is all the difference between appealing to authority in a meek, respectful manner on limited occasions, on the one hand, and displaying an argumentative, combative attitude, on the other.

Sitting on the Outside While Standing on the Inside

One of the common attitudes in children is giving outward obedience while displaying an inner attitude of defiance. The common cliché for this is the child who is commanded by his parents to be seated but who, as displayed by his attitude, remains standing on the inside!

Parents must deal with obvious attitudes of defiance in the same manner as outward disobedience. Many parents who lack confidence in the exercise of parental authority fail to exert the level of decisive leadership with their children so necessary to effective parenting. They may feel that simply achieving outward obedience with their child is a major accomplishment. *However, outward obedience done with an attitude of inner defiance is no obedience at all.* In fact, it is a dangerous state of affairs because it actually reinforces in the child a hypocritical relationship with authority.

While a parent cannot always see into the heart of the child, inner attitudes of defiance are often obvious, especially with younger children, through the rolling of the eyes, sighing, failing to make eye contact, mumbling, and similar “body language” indicators. Another evidence of an inappropriate attitude comes in the form of partial obedience in response to the parent. For example, a child told to stack the books on the table may stack all of the books except one, or may do so in a deliberately sloppy manner, or pitch them onto the table in a manner that clearly displays his displeasure. The wise parent will ensure that such inner attitudes are treated as decisively with appropriate consequences as outward disobedience.

In writing about the last days, Paul describes a world culture characterized by disrespect and ungratefulness. We certainly see such attitudes as being very much a part of our own culture. Christian parents must understand that such attitudes must not be tolerated in their children. To allow them to fall into this spirit of the world is unloving and certainly not in the best interests of their temporal *and* eternal well-being.

The Misapplication of Grace and Mercy

A common mistake among Christian parents is rooted in the erroneous understanding of grace and mercy in relation to a child’s irresponsibility and disobedience. There is a shallow and misinformed mindset within Christianity that the grace and mercy of God eliminate human accountability to the demands of God’s Law. Grace must be understood as God’s fulfilling His holy standard required by the Law through the life and death of Jesus Christ. What we could not attain through our works, He Himself

has accomplished on our behalf. Furthermore, as a result of His grace toward us, we are recipients of His mercy. *But the grace and mercy of God do not eliminate human responsibility and accountability or our need for obedience.* As the apostle Paul wrote to Titus, God’s saving grace instructs us “to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age” (*Titus 2:12*). The death of Jesus Christ bridges the gap between man and God, but His sacrifice leads us to a deeper appreciation for our need to give Him our utter obedience and to be responsible (in response) to the great price He has paid for our redemption.

Unfortunately, many parents misapply the concept of grace and mercy by constantly excusing their children from the consequences of their disobedience and irresponsibility. *But constantly bailing our children out is not to be merciful, but quite the opposite – it is bordering upon abuse.* Giving them repeated warnings and second chances is to give them an unreal and perhaps fatal concept of their responsibility and accountability before God. Once again we refer to Susannah Wesley’s quote: “As self-will is the root of all sin and misery, so whatever cherishes this in children insures their after wretchedness and faithlessness.” It is only when the child has been consistently taught that he is accountable for his actions and responsible before God that he will be able to truly appreciate the great cost to God for His grace and mercy as extended to mankind.

Furthermore, we must understand that there is somewhat of a distinction between grace and being gracious. There are certainly times when, in the parents’ judgment, the child needs to be excused from the consequences of his actions based on what the parent may determine to be extenuating circumstances. At such times, it is constructive for the child to see the gracious and merciful attitude of authority in taking into consideration special circumstances. *But when excusing the child from his responsibility is more the rule than the exception, then the parents’ actions are not at all based on grace and mercy, but are a gross distortion of these precious Christian doctrines.* As stated previously, the consistent application of consequences intended to teach the child to be responsible is always in his best interests and is that course of action which will bring him to a true appreciation for the genuine grace and mercy of God.

External Rules and Standards Administered with Love and Kindness

It should go without saying that parents should always relate to their children with loving kindness, gentleness and tenderness. In particular, fathers are commanded by Paul to not “provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (*Eph. 6:4*). Effective authority does not require angry yelling or threatening.

A godly parent will understand that he will gain the child’s respect and obedience by acting decisively the first time the child disobeys or is irresponsible². He can administer the consequences in a quiet, humble, yet firm manner, without anger and without raising his voice. By doing so, he can help the child understand that the responsibility for the consequences is a result of the child’s disobedience and/or irresponsible behavior. He can even empathize with the child over having to suffer the consequences. It is in this context that the child will gain much respect for the parent as a decisive authority figure who means what he says, but also one who is compassionate and truly cares for the child’s welfare. Thus, the

²It is important to distinguish what we might call childish irresponsibility – or immaturity – from the irresponsibility associated more with the child’s carelessness or negligence. A child should never be disciplined for his immaturity – that which is beyond his level of proficiency or developmental ability. To discipline a child for that for which he cannot be held fully responsible because of his immaturity is, indeed, quite harmful to the child’s healthy development. The parent must discern and distinguish between that which is irresponsible and deserving of discipline, on the one hand, and that which is primarily a function of the child’s immaturity, on the other hand.

wise parent strives to be loving and affirming, even in his quiet administration of the consequences, and one who does not find it necessary to raise his voice of discipline out of anger.

When parents find themselves growing frustrated and reacting toward the child by raising their voice, it is an indication, with rare exception, that the parent has not been consistently administering adequate consequences all along for the behavior or attitude in question. The answer to this problem will not be for the parent to lose control of his own emotions or to threaten or yell at the child. This certainly is not the way God relates to us. Furthermore, the child will be provoked and react against the parent when he is berated. Indeed, “the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God” (*James 1:20*). Thus, the wise parent does not rely upon threats, anger or raising his voice to command the child’s obedience. Such an approach engenders a lack of respect in the child for dad or mom. Sadly, many parents have inadvertently trained their children that they are serious about the child’s obedience only when the parent raises his voice or gives a third warning (“I really mean it this time!”).

The wise parent lets the consequences provide the needed discipline and maintains a gentle and loving spirit with the child. If the parent is consistent and ensures an adequate level of consequence that will minimize or eliminate the disobedience or irresponsibility, then he will save himself much frustration and potential anger, and will fulfill Paul’s exhortation to not “provoke your children to anger.”

It is important that parents understand that discipline is equated with parental love. The writer of *Hebrews* observes, “... those whom the Lord loves, He disciplines” (*Hebrews 12:6*). Certainly, the administration of discipline is no fun. The writer goes on to observe, “All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful...”, but then concludes: “... yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (*Hebrews 12:11*). Thus, the wise parent understands that the best interests of his child are represented with firm, consistent and loving discipline. Through such training, the child is prepared to accept responsibility for his choices and actions and to enter into the adult world as a mature individual able to successfully relate to his fellow man and the authority structures he will encounter at all levels of society. Furthermore, and most importantly, he will be prepared to serve the purposes of God by making proper responses to the ultimate authority of God over his life.

Summary Thoughts

The above certainly do not represent all that could be presented concerning training children, but they do cover some of the more relevant issues faced by Christian parents in contemporary society. If applied in a consistent manner, God will work through the parents’ obedience to these Biblical principles for parenting and bring forth good fruit in their children.

Suffice it to say, the bottom line for effective parenting is the diligent intercession of the parents on behalf of their children. All of the above parenting principles will have little effect without God’s blessing and anointing, and the wise parent is the one who casts himself upon the Lord in utter dependence through much prayer and intercession. Indeed, as one wise man has stated, “Good parenting does not produce Christians; only the Holy Spirit can convict and convert the heart!”

Before concluding this study, let us consider one final aspect of utilizing external rules and standards in the training of our young people.

SECTION VI

LEARNING TO DEFER TO AUTHORITY OUTSIDE OF THE HOME

. . . our individual preferences must sometimes be deferred for the sake of submitting to God-ordained authority and out of love for the larger community.

Deference of personal preferences for the corporate good is a vital lesson to be learned by our young people, and the structure of reasonable standards, whether in the school, a youth organization, a sports program, or other corporate settings, is an important “tutor” to teach our children this most important lesson.

The fundamental issue we have discussed in this study revolves around the notion of teaching the child to defer to the authority of God and to be responsible for his actions and attitudes. The parents and the external rules and standards they establish are the primary representation of God's authority to the child, and it is through them that he learns the lessons of obedience and self-control in deference to a higher authority.

It is important to understand that God brings other institutions along side the parents to assist in this all-important training dynamic. One of the most common is the school, but we could also include church groups, community youth organizations, sports programs, service organizations, and similar entities. Each group represents authority in one form or another, and the child's involvement in these types of organizations represents further opportunities to learn through the school of practical experience how to properly relate to authority.

What becomes a very special dynamic is that these other organizations will represent a diversity of external rules and standards different from what the child is used to in the home. This can be a healthy experience as he learns to relate to authority in different forms in this larger entity known as "society."

How, then, should the child respond to authority with external rules and standards that are different from what he is used to in his own family? Furthermore, how can parents use these experiences to further teach the child the proper attitude and relationship to authority? While we could use any number of examples to illustrate this point, let us consider the school, since it is perhaps the most common entity outside of the family in which the child is involved and represents such a large part of most children's lives.

When the child enters school, he will find many rules and standards that are the same or similar in principle as in his home. For example, the parents and school would both agree on fundamental moral standards such as honesty, the need to treat teachers and fellow students with respect, or the importance of being responsible with school assignments. There is no tension at this point, because both parents and school are on the same page.

On the other hand, there will be issues where there are a diversity of standards and opinions among Christian parents. One of the best illustrations of this pertains to the matter of modesty and dress. Should students be expected to "dress up," or is more casual dress appropriate for school? For a girl, is a dress that is one inch above the knee acceptable modesty, or must the dress be below the knee? Should boys be allowed to wear long hair that comes down over the collar, or should their hair be cut shorter? When we consider this type of issue, we quickly come to understand that there may be many opinions about what is best among equally conscientious and responsible Christian parents. Who is to say what which position is "best?"

If we were all private individuals relating directly to God, it would be enough merely to maintain a clear conscience individually before Him concerning how we feel about our example of dress and modesty. But we do not live in such a private world; we also are social creatures who must live in relationship with one another, and so we must deal head-on with this issue of our differing standards with such issues. It is in such a place that the child has opportunity to learn further lessons about his need to defer to a higher authority, and also to learn to prefer others above self (*Philippians 2:1-7*).

How, then, do we solve this problem of determining what the rules and standards for our children should be outside of our immediate family? The answer lies in the concept of "reasonable authority." Authority that understands its proper God-given function is both loving (it has the best interests at heart of those whom it serves) and reasonable (sensible, moderate, tolerable, not excessive, given to that which is according to sound reason). Such authority must, in corporate settings such as the school, establish

reasonable rules and standards for the children. Where standards are not clearly stated in the *Bible*, it must seek to avoid establishing unnecessary or arbitrary standards. Where it feels standards are necessary, such as our example of modesty and dress, it must seek to establish rules which are reasonable and carefully thought out.

Not everyone affected by this authority will agree with or prefer all the rules and standards which may be established. But if the authority is reasonable and loving, it is necessary for individuals to be willing to defer their personal preferences in these non-essential issues. Or we could say it like this: if God instructs us to show proper respect and submission to authority, even when it is unreasonable (*1 Peter 2:13-3:14*), how much more should we teach our children to submit to reasonable authority even when they (and perhaps the parents, as well) do not fully agree with the rule or standard? *This is yet another vital lesson to be learned by our young people: our individual preferences must sometimes be deferred for the sake of submitting to God-ordained authority and out of love for the larger community.* This does not preclude the opportunity for individuals to appeal to reasonable authority to consider changes in rules or standards. On the other hand, the cry from students and parents alike, "You cannot impose your standards on me!" may be more an indication of the rebellious spirit of this age rather than a legitimate expression of concern. *Deference of personal preferences for the corporate good is a vital lesson to be learned by our young people, and the structure of reasonable standards, whether in the school, a youth organization, a sports program, or other corporate settings, is an important "tutor" to teach our children this most important lesson.* Wise parents will recognize such opportunities and make the most of them to reinforce these lessons to their children.

CONCLUSION

There can be no more important lesson passed along by parents to their children than how to properly relate to God's authority, and parents must recognize that they are the primary representatives and teachers who communicate that authority to their children. While the parents' example in their actions and attitudes will make the greatest impact, their wise and judicial use of external rules and standards is the practical tool that will be the child's tutor in bringing him to a proper understanding of his need to submit to God and all forms of temporal authority derived from God. Not only is the child's temporal well being at stake, but his eternal well being, as well. Therefore, the wise parent will make this issue one of his highest priorities. This will take special courage because we live in an age of lawlessness and rebellion against authority; nevertheless, it is this attitude of submission to God's authority that is one of the distinctives of genuine Christianity and that stands out in a world where mankind has turned his back on God.

May God grant His grace and enabling power to those parents who purpose to diligently train their children in this all-important principle of submission to God's authority.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

SECTION I

1. Reflect on the author's conclusion on page eight- "authority as it is expressed in God and our relation to it is the ultimate of all human issues." Now look up the following references: *Isaiah* 40:21-26, *Matthew* 28:18-20 and *Romans* 14:11-12. Is the author's statement biblical? Explain your answer.
2. How do the terms "moral" and "responsible" go hand in hand as defined in Section I? How is this reality reflected in the *Genesis 3* account of the fall of man? What other biblical examples can you think of to illustrate this?
3. If God arbitrarily overruled and wiped out the consequences of man's sin, would we still have moral freedom? Discuss how this principle would apply to parenting.

SECTION II

1. Read *Galatians 3 and 4*. In these verses, how does Paul draw a relationship between the Law and our realization of our need for Christ?
2. How do children see God's authority through external rules? What principles should parents teach their children to help them learn the proper response to discipline?

SECTION III

1. What is legalism? According to this section, what is the difference between legalism and legitimate rules? Why do we as Christians need external authority structures to govern behavior?
2. How is the cry of "legalism" among contemporary Christians sometimes a smokescreen for their resistance to authority?

SECTION IV

1. Explain how unqualified submission and obedience to God's authority are always in the individual's best interest. According to Susannah Wesley, what is always the "grand impediment to our temporal and eternal happiness?" Why?
2. How can a parent's failure to check and restrain even "trivial" self-will in a child be potentially damaging? Keeping in mind that even the least failure to hold a child accountable for his actions can be damaging, then what is a parent's level of responsibility?

SECTION V

1. What lesson do we teach the child when we are inconsistent in requiring obedience and responsibility?
2. In our culture, it is often thought that negative consequences for undesirable behavior are cruel and even harmful to the child. If man is *moral* and *responsible* then what is in reality the most loving course for parents to take in response to disobedient and irresponsible behavior?
3. Could fearing the parent ever be healthy for a child? When?
4. In light of *Genesis 3*, does a child always need to know why he should obey? As a child grows older, how does reason fit into the picture?
5. What is the difference between argument and appeal? What should be the parent's response to each?
6. Now that you have completed this section, explain the confusion between grace and permissiveness. How is permissiveness harmful to the child?
7. List some of the ways parents provoke their children. How can the loving and consistent use of consequences for disobedience and irresponsibility prevent provocation of the child?

SECTION VI

1. Read *1 Peter 2:18-3:6; Romans 13:1-7; Ephesians 5:21; and Titus 3:1*. In this context how is submitting to authority outside the home, even when representing differing standards, a valuable principle to teach our children?
2. Can resistance and criticism to such authority by the parents be harmful for the child? How and why?
3. What is the biblically correct way for both parents and their children to deal with concerns with authority? What fruit can come out of dealing with correctly dealing with concerns?
4. Sum up the most important points of biblical discipline. What is it? Why, how, and when do we do it? Who are we reflecting when we administer it properly?

RESOURCES

Following are a number of contemporary parenting resources rooted in the Christian worldview which will provide parents with specific tools for implementing the principles contained in this booklet. Most can be located through bookstores or via the Internet.

Books

Age of Opportunity; Tedd Tripp
Boundaries with Kids; Henry Cloud /John Townsend
Bringing Up Boys; James Dobson
Bringing Up Girls; James Dobson
Dare to Discipline; James Dobson
Everyday Talk; John A. Younts
Get Outta My Face; Rick Horne
Grace Based Parenting; Tim Kimmel
How to Develop Your Child's Temperament; Beverley Lahaye
Hide or Seek; James Dobson
Instructing a Child's Heart; Tedd and Margie Tripp
Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands; Paul Tripp
Making Your Child Mind Without Losing Yours; Kevin Leman
Parenting is Hard Work; Scott Turnansky
Parenting Isn't For Cowards; James Dobson
Preparing for Adolescence; James Dobson
Say Goodbye to Whining, Complaining, and Bad Attitudes in You and Your Kids; Scott Turnansky
Shepherding a Child's Heart; Tedd Tripp
Spanking – a Loving Discipline; Roy Lessin
Spiritual Mentoring of Teens; Joe White and Jim Weidmann
The Duty of Parents; J. C. Ryle
The Effective Father; Gordon MacDonald
The Key to Your Child's Heart; Gary Smalley
The Strong Willed Child; James Dobson
Your Child's Profession of Faith

Audios/Videos

A Peaceful Home; Elizabeth Elliot
Bringing Up Boys; James Dobson
Shepherding a Child's Heart; Tedd Trip