



You and Your Children



Being a parent is the biggest – the most important job in life – yet there is hardly any training for it. Mostly we learn about being a parent from the way our parents raised us.



Remember how you felt when you did something thoughtless as a child, and your mother or father got mad at you. You wanted understanding, but you probably got criticism:

- When you slammed the door because you were excited about something and forgot to shut the door quietly.
- When you ran through the house and there was mud on your shoes because you had been having fun playing in the vacant lot.
- Or when you spilled your milk, or dropped your glass and broke it.
- Or when you really wanted to say something and no one would listen – so you yelled it.

If your child does these things, or other things that annoy you. You will probably find yourself reacting to them the same way your parents reacted to you. Even the things we say we will never, never do to our children like our mom or dad did to us – we often, in fact usually, find ourselves using the same gestures, words and facial expressions with our children that we disliked so much from our own parents.



That's because we never had any other kind of training on how to react in those situations that are like what we did as children when we needed understanding but instead we received unfair criticism. The reason we over-react and become so angry over the things our children do that annoy us, is because those feelings of being unfairly treated are still in us – and they flare up when we see our children do them.

Remember your parents look (probably your mom's), and her voice, when you did something wrong? That's probably the look you get on your face, and the tone of voice you use on your child. This causes the same kind of pain in your children as it caused in you, when you wanted to express yourself and no one would listen. Don't do the same thing to your child. Take time to listen to what he has to say – don't just automatically yell, "Stop it!"

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Take time to find out what is going on in your child's life when he runs in with mud on his shoes. What's on his mind is much more important than what's on his shoes. Find out what's going on in his world. What made him too excited to wipe his feet? He didn't plan to annoy you – he was excited about something – let him tell you what it was. It is very important to him – and could be fun for you. He may have found a caterpillar and was running in to get a jar to put it in. Join in the excitement with him – help him find a jar – show him how to punch holes in the lid so the caterpillar won't die – go out and help him coax the caterpillar on to a twig and put it in the jar with a leaf to eat.



Take time to admire his caterpillar with him – sit and look at it and explain to him that one day that little caterpillar will change into a beautiful butterfly that can fly from one flower to another. Tell him that is what happens to us inside when we accept Jesus as our Savior.

Find him a book on caterpillars and butterflies. Read it with him. The time you spend with him in his world will refresh you in the things of your world – and it will give your child happy memories that will last a lifetime. Memories that could have been ugly and resentful if you had concentrated on criticism of his shoes and the mud, instead of his childhood excitement and his mind, and his spirit.



Every child has needs – just like you have needs. See your relationship with your child as a partnership where each of you helps the other to get their needs met. Get to know each other as a teammate. Learn each others strengths and weaknesses – your children will work with you if you share your needs with them. And they will care about your needs, if you care about theirs.

They will see their needs different than you see them, and they won't have a clue that you have any needs until you share them. You may think their needs are to brush their teeth, make their bed, keep their stuff picked up, and clean their room. (Isn't it interesting that the children's belongings are "stuff," and your belonging are "your things.") Your whole relationship with your child can be broken if you are unwilling to take time to see their needs as they see them, not as you see them.

Tragically, too many parent/child relationships are built on whether or not the child cleans his room or takes out the trash, both of which jobs have zero interest for a child. But, they become the testing ground for the parent as to whether they are being a good parent or not. If the child cleans his room, the parent feels they are still in control and Johnny is a good boy. If he refuses to clean his room, the parent feels out of control and engages in a battle of wills until the child can be forced to obey through punishment or loss of a privilege and Johnny is viewed as a bad boy.

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This has a tragic impact on a child – proving to him that he is only of value for what he does, not who he is. Your children love you. They are not born with hostility toward you. Hostility comes when they find out they can't trust your love because sometimes it's there and other times it's taken away. The way it is taken away is when you won't listen to them. They are feeling happy or sad about something in their little life, but you won't listen until they have cleaned their room or taken out the trash!

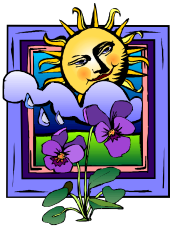


What is their response going to be? They feel hurt and angry – what is the one way they can show that hurt and anger? Through the one thing they have control over - their will. By refusing to clean their room – or refusing to take out the trash – or refusing to do what you want, they get your attention, which is all they wanted in the first place. Even if it's negative attention, the fact that you are looking at them and talking to them – even if it's anger – proves to them in some negative way that you still love them. Teenagers use the one thing they have control of – their bodies – to express their hurt and anger through anorexia and eating disorders, sexual activity, drug use.



Children's only security is to know they are loved. If they have to seek for it in negative ways as your children, they will seek for it in negative ways as adults. If they keep seeking for it as children and find that love is not there, they will keep seeking it when they are grown by belonging to wrong groups or gangs as a teenager because they are accepted there, or giving themselves to the wrong sexual partner because they thought they had been promised love and understanding for who they were.

Don't be afraid to love them! Be there for them! Listen when they talk to you. It's important to them and one day, when they are grown, you will wish with all your heart you had paid more attention to them. They respond to love as a flower does to the sun. Let Jesus be the Son that shines on both of you. Instruct your child in the ways of the Lord.



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Because this is such an intimate and personal area – that of motherhood – there really are no questions we can ask regarding the study – but each mother can search her heart in light of what has been said, and find out if she is repeating the same behaviors to her children that were so hurtful to her as a child.

It would also be good to discuss the following Scriptures:

- Matthew 19:13,14 *“Little children were brought to Jesus that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples held them back. Jesus said, ‘Leave the children alone, allow the little ones to come to Me, and do not forbid or restrain them, for of such as these is the Kingdom of Heaven made of.’”*

MEMORY VERSE (Proverbs 22:6) *“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”*

Closing note: Remember your child is a spirit being that will live forever- God has entrusted him to you to raise, but he belongs to God.