

A seminar providing  
Biblical Principles of Parenting

presented  
by  
Keith Boyer

Understanding Parenting From A Biblical Perspective

## Children: Enjoying The Challenge

Behold, children are a gift of the LORD;

The fruit of the womb is a reward.

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,

So are the children of one's youth.

Psalm 127:3-4

# Children: Enjoying The Challenge

## Introduction

### Welcome

Name?

Children?

What do you expect from this study?

### Why Me?

No Expert

Not perfect

Some Basic Truths

### Expectations

Attend all sessions unless there is an extenuating circumstance.

Provide a notebook in which to keep the session notes and your assignments.

Complete your weekly assignment and come prepared to share your observations. This is a discussion based study, feel free to ask question or make comments during the interaction.

It is recommended that you purchase and read the following books over the course of the study.

How Children Raise Parents by Dan Allender  
(Waterbrook Press), 2003

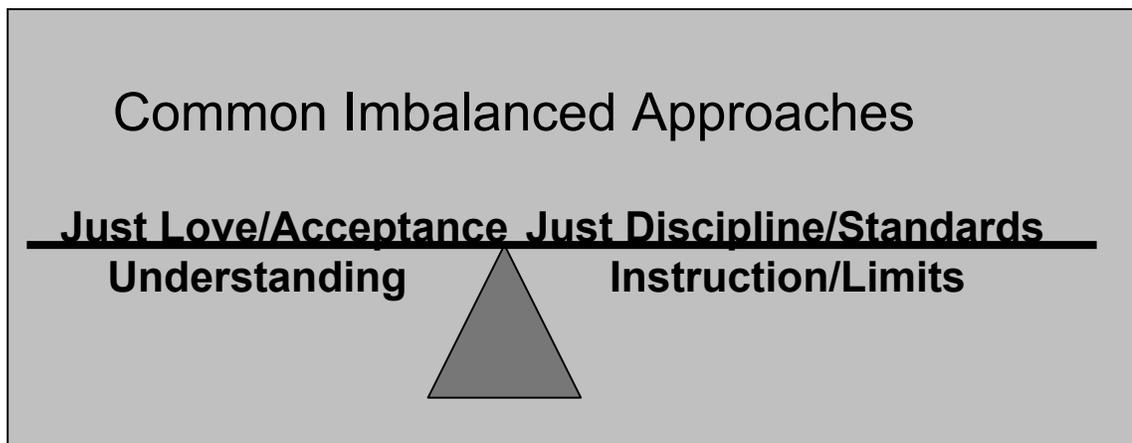
Raising Great Kids by Henry Cloud and John Townsend  
(Zondervan Publish House), 1999

## I. Four Basic Questions That Parents Are Asking.

### A. Why is my child doing that?

(Take a few minutes and list three behaviors your child does that seem to make absolutely no sense to you? How have you responded to these behaviors in the past?)

### B. What does my child need from me?



#### 1. All They Need Is Love.

The basic need of my child is the development of a healthy self-image. When difficulty arises it is necessary to simply provide more love and attention. All the child needs is more understanding.

#### 2. They Need To Know Who's Boss.

Children need to be seen and not heard. They are to be taught obedience and rules and must know the limits and standards. When difficulty arises it is necessary to provide more discipline. All the child needs is a good swat on the bottom.

## C. How can I be guaranteed that my child will turn out right?

### 1. Two primary myths of parenting.

- a. Providing the right influences guarantees the desired results.

The assumption is that if we give children a good home—love, positive experiences, the right social exposure, and a proper education they will be well adjusted productive adults. The sense of pressure and demand is strong. The emphasis is upon what to do with or for your child. Often the time spent dragging our children to tennis tournaments, music lessons, soccer games, and a legion of other “necessary” opportunities fuels a child’s sense of entitlement and a parent’s feeling that his child is an excessive drain on energy, time and money. This sense leads to the attitude, “My kid owes me big time.” He owes me a good and productive life. (Allender, pp. 7 and 16)

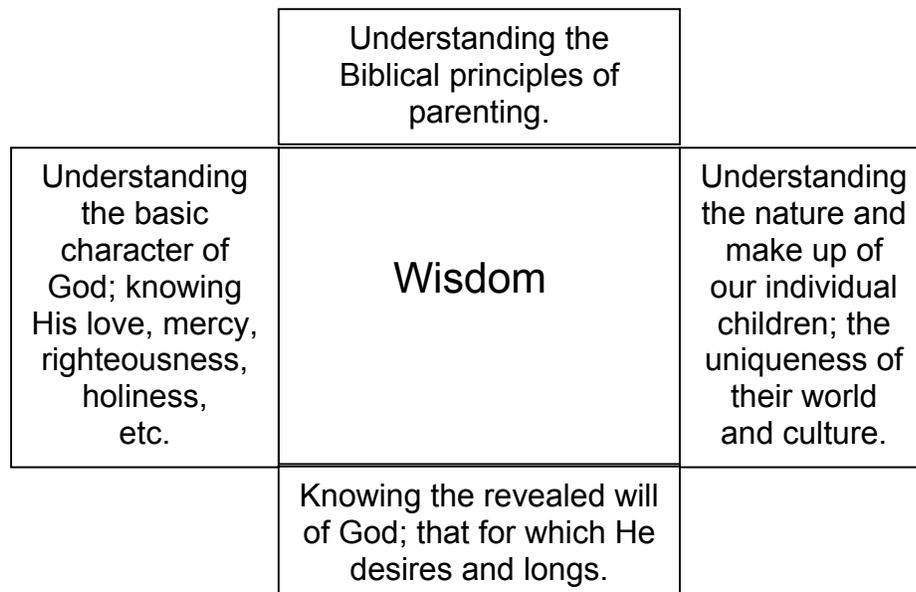
- b. Following the proper Biblical principles guarantees the desired result.

If parents adhere to the right list of biblical principles mixed with a smattering of psychological insights, their consistent implementation of these principles will guarantee a spiritually mature and well-adjusted result. The common theme running through these approaches is that if you do parenting “right”, your kids will avoid the common pitfalls and turn out well. This promise rests on three presumptions: 1. The Bible lays out a detailed and comprehensive strategy for parenting, 2. the Bible promises a positive outcome if its principles are diligently followed, and 3. the Bible predicts that bad parents will produce bad kids. While widely accepted as gospel truth, all three presumptions are seriously flawed. (Allender, pp.18 and 30)

1. The Scripture provides only a general outline concerning parenting, with little on such topics as love, self-image, cultural engagements, etc.
2. Often extrabiblical material is presented as Biblical truth preventing parents from feeling the freedom to respond to the specific needs of their children.
3. The most used verse for supporting this is Proverbs 22:6 which is a poor translation and does not provide a promise or guarantee.
4. By these standards, our God is a failure as a parent.

N.B. The Scripture calls us to be good parents but does not guarantee the outcome. We are responsible for our actions not the reactions of our children. 1 Timothy 3:4-5 speaks of provision and care, not outcome.

c. The Scriptures do provide principles of parenting which teach the basics of our involvement. To this must be added a general knowledge of the character and will of God. And finally, wisdom must be added which creatively applies these principles to the day by day involvement with our children.



**D. What should I do to become the parent God would have me to be. (The four primary tasks of parenting.)**

1. It is essential to drive out foolishness with standards and discipline.
2. It is essential to instill wisdom or character through mercy and truth.
3. It is essential to provide safety and security through grace and love.
4. It is essential to learn from our children how to parent them through humility, involvement, and observation. Learning to parent is a never-ending process.

**Discussion Questions**

On which side of the possible common imbalances do you tend to fall as a parent? On what side does your spouse fall? What do you observe as the result of this imbalance?

Where have you heard these promises made? What was your response? What is the impact you as a parent face in the absence of these myths? Why do you suppose people make these promises? When these promises are accepted as true, what happens when a child fails?

**Assignment**

Come to the session next week prepared to discuss your observations.

Observe your children. Write down three behaviors that concern you. Ask yourself, what impact does this behavior have on me, on my spouse? Ponder what the child might be trying to accomplish.

Pray daily for yourself, your spouse, your children, and the other members of the study.

It is recommended that you read the first three chapters of Raising Great Kids.

# Task One: Drive Out Foolishness With Standards and Discipline

## II. Task One: Diving Out Foolishness

### A. The problem is foolishness

#### 1. The declaration of Scripture

- a. Proverbs 10:1 A wise son makes a father glad,  
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.

15:20 A wise son makes a father glad, But a  
foolish man despises his mother

17:21 He who begets a fool *does so* to his  
sorrow, And the father of a fool has no joy.

22:15 Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a  
child; The rod of discipline will remove it far  
from him.

- b. The problem with children is that they are  
phenomenal observers. They see everything  
but they do not interpret the information well  
because of immaturity and foolishness.

#### 2. The meaning of foolishness

- a. The belief that I can make my world work my  
way, according to my rules, without any  
consequences for my decisions. The belief that  
happiness comes from getting your own way.
- b. Psalm 14:1, 53:1 (The fool has said)

- c. Judges 17:6, 21:25 (Everyone did what was right in their own eyes.) The society as a whole spurned instruction, correction, authority, absolutes. Autonomous man seeks absolute independence from God.

Every baby starts life as a savage. He is completely selfish and self-centered. He wants what he wants when he wants it: his bottle, his mother's attention, his playmate's toys, his uncle's watch, or whatever. Deny him these and he seethes with rage and aggressiveness which would be murderous were he not so helpless. He's dirty, he has no morals, no knowledge, no developed skills. This means that all children, not just certain children but all children, are born delinquent. If permitted to continue in their self-centered world of infancy, given free reign to their impulsive actions to satisfy each want, every child would grow up a criminal, a thief, a killer, a rapist. (From a report compiled by the Minnesota Crime Commission)

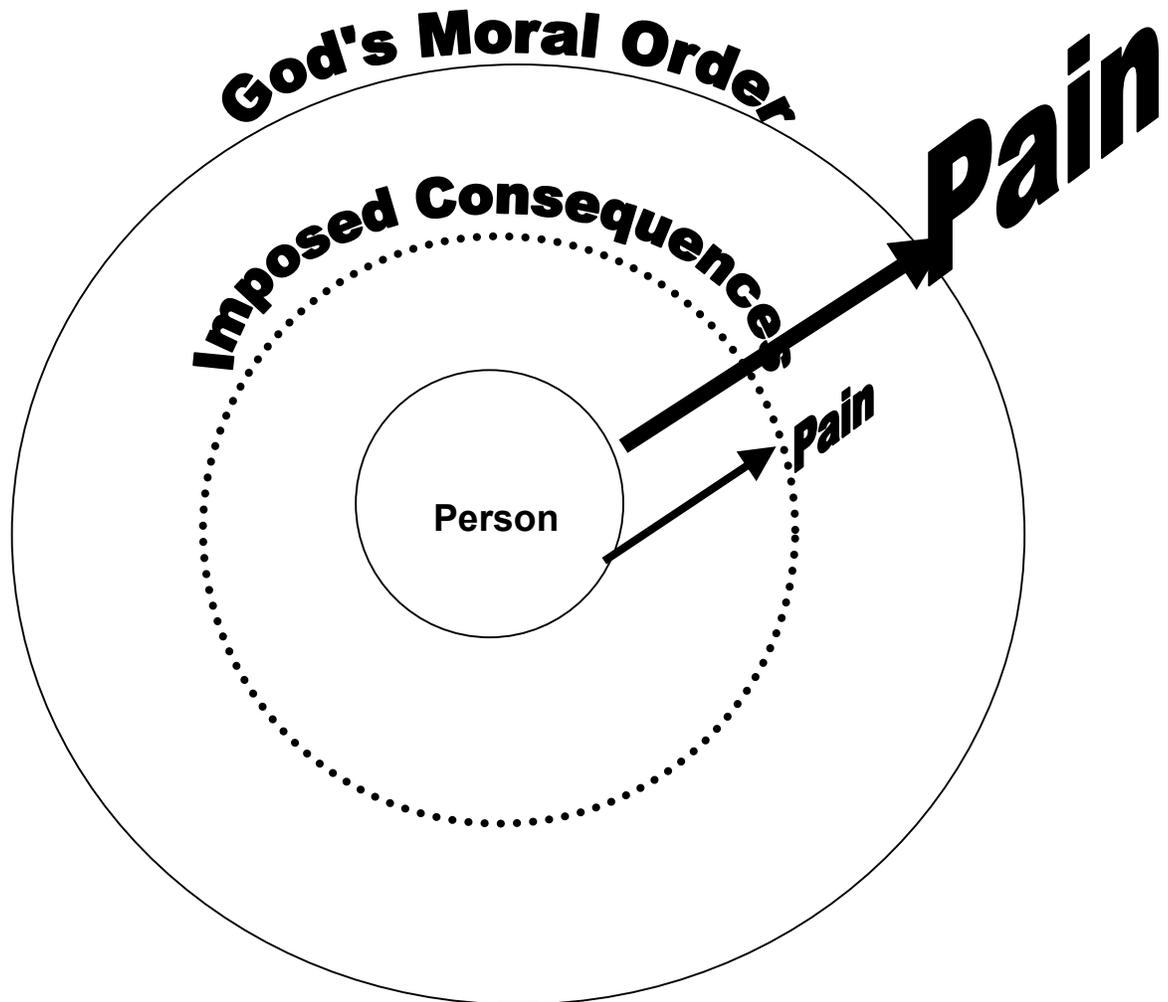
## Questions to Ponder

What is your reaction to this quote from a government sponsored study? Do you accept the premise behind this statement? What does this do to the idea that children are totally innocent at birth? How does this relate to the concept that foolishness is bound in the heart of a child? Have you observed such qualities in your own children?

### 3. The Means of Impacting Foolishness.

- a. A child must understand the reality of consequences.
  - 1. A child learns the reality of God's physical order. A child learns such concepts as gravity, heat, cold. They learn that to live best is to live within the reality of these facts, to violate them leads to immediate consequences.

2. A child must learn the reality of a moral order. That life works best when lived within the parameters set by God. A child must learn that violating God's moral order results in consequences.
  - b. A child must experience in small and immediate doses the reality of the larger truths.



- c. There is a delay in the consequences for breaking God's moral order. In the foolishness of a child this delay is interpreted as the absence of consequences. The parents shorten this delay.

- d. The younger the child the more immediate the experience of the consequences must be in order for them to understand the connection. Discipline is an age appropriate discomfort leading to the understanding of the greater pain experience with adulthood.

It may seem gracious and kind to ignore troubling, childish behavior. But dismissing such behavior injures the child by insulating him from suffering and failing. The result for the child is a loss of the confidence that comes from surmounting obstacles, including the ones inside us that foil much of what we want to do. An undisciplined child fails to grow in respect for himself and others. A parent must bring consequences that fit the offense, that if left unaddressed, would hinder a child's development. Those moments will be filled with reluctance, doubt and sorrow for the parent. (Allender pg. 138)

- e. We must always remember that we do not control the behavior or the choices but rather the consequences.
- f. The standards that we established are to be a reflection of the standards of God. As the child develops, the standards of the parents are relaxed until the child is only responsible to the standards of God.

## Questions to Ponder

Give examples of the delays in the consequences of violating God's moral order. How do you feel when you see your child in pain as a result of their failures? What is the natural response to this?

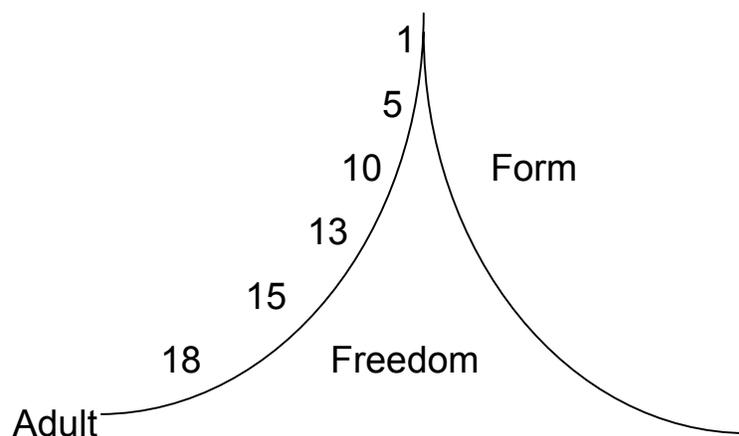
What are some of the standards that you have in your house that are not moral issues and will need to change as the child matures?

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#### 4. The Character of Discipline Reflecting God's Moral Order.

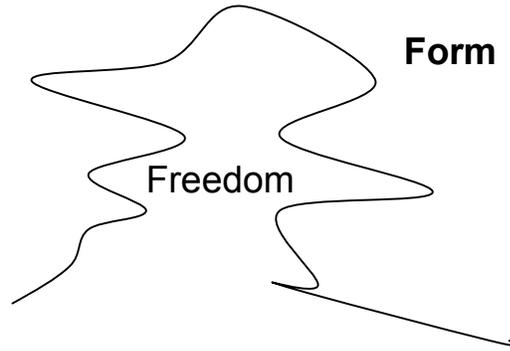
- a. It is essential to have standards that are clear and understood.
  - 1. Children are natural born blame shifters.
  - 2. Clear standards require a child to take responsibility for their actions.
  - 3. These standards must be upheld.
    - a. The standards are set by the parents, reflecting the ability of the child to handle responsibility.
    - b. The form must be clear, clearly communicated and understood. If a child violates an unspoken expectation, the first time is a learning experience, the next time it is disciplined.
    - c. The form is non-negotiable. Once they are established, don't be talked or nagged out of it. Discussion follows obedience.
    - d. These standards are the forms within the relationship.
- b. It is essential to have standards that are appropriate.
  - 1. These standards must reflect a child's growing ability to handle more responsibility.

2. They are therefore age and maturity appropriate.
3. This freedom allows a child to know the thrill of non-pressured free choices. It permits a child to know the joy of making decisions based on my desires and wants.
4. This freedom must include decisions that your child makes that you don't like, but do not violate your standards.
5. Their choices within this area of freedom must be free of consequence, especially emotional withdrawal.
6. This sense of joy and freedom is a safeguard from cheap thrills like drugs and sex.
7. These appropriate standards will be called freedom.



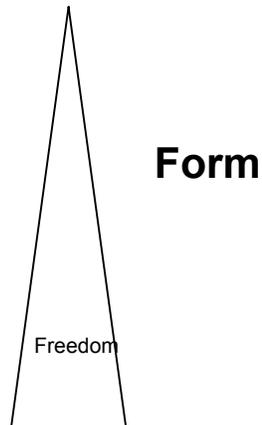
5. Three Common Mistakes Made By Parents In Establishing Form and Freedom.

- a. Mistake #1: Forms that are not clear and consistent, and uncertain areas of freedom.



1. There is an uncertainty of what is expected at any given time.
2. Some will respond in rebellion, the uncertainty leading to an attitude of “who cares”.
3. Some will respond with repressed anger and fear in response to the uncertainty of the home

- b. Mistake #2: Forms that do not permit growth in the area of freedom.



1. The only possibility for growth and freedom is through rebellion.
  2. Some will respond with a lack of maturity and ability to handle the world.
- c. Mistake # 3: Forms that are too broad, providing no real direction.

Form



### Freedom

1. There is no sense of direction or security.
2. There is no understanding of the consequences of choices.
3. There is often a sense of entitlement.

## Questions to Ponder

Where do you allow your child to do things, within your standards, that you do not like? What might be some of the hidden consequences for which you might look? Why is it important to allow this? Of the three errors, which one is most present in your style of parenting? What is the outcome of that imbalance?

## Assignment

Come to the session next week prepared to discuss your observations.

List three rules in your house that will change as your children grow older. List three times this week when you child was allowed to do something you don't like. How did you feel like responding?

Pray daily for yourself, your spouse, your children, and the other members of the study.

It is recommended that you read chapters 4-5 in Raising Great Kids.

## B. The Questions of Foolishness

1. The behaviors of a child ask two primary questions.
  - a. These two questions are in every behavior and interaction of a child.
  - b. One of the questions will be primary in every interaction.
  - c. The art of parenting is to determine which is primary and then respond.
2. Am I loved no matter what I do?
  - a. Every child is aware of the gap between my ideal self (what I should be) and my real self (what I am).
  - b. They are aware that there is no way to bridge this gap.
  - c. The child is asking, "Will you continue to love me, treat me with respect, see my inherent worth and dignity, stay involved with me, and be committed to my well being no matter what I do, no matter how wide that gap?"
  - d. To this first question, proper parenting requires that I answer with a resounding "yes". I am willing to embrace the joy of truly loving you. I will learn to enjoy who you are.
3. Can I get my own way without consequence or responsibility?
  - a. In the heart of every child there is a struggle with foolishness.

- b. Foolishness in the child leads them to resist personal responsibility and to fail to accept consequences.
- c. The child is asking. "Can I get my own way without responsibility and without consequences.\?"
- d. To this second question, proper parenting requires that I answer with a resounding "no". I am willing to suffer the hardship of enforcing boundaries?

4. The possible responses to the questions. (No Guarantees)

## Can I Get My Own Way?

Yes

No

No

Yes

	<p><b>Dangerous/ Demeaning</b></p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p>Children: Either Compliant or Defiant</p>	<p><b>Rule-bound/ Dull</b></p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p>Children: Either Compliant or Defiant</p>
	<p><b>Indulgent/ Distant</b></p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p>Children: Passive/ Dependent</p>	<p><b>Strength/ Delight</b></p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p>Children: Confident/ Compassionate</p>

DO YOU LOVE ME?

## NO/YES Home:

There is neither love nor supervision in this type of home. There are often high levels of abuse or neglect.

The child will seek to find both love and boundaries elsewhere. There is a sense of the survival of the fittest.

This home can produce either a compliant or a defiant child.

Often boys in this home learn to make life work through toughness and power, girls learn to use their bodies to manipulate.

## NO/NO Home

There are many Christian homes that fit this pattern. This is a strict home with stringent rules, clear consequences and a high demand on the children. However, there is little warmth, laughter, and enjoyment of each other. Grace and emotions are seen as a weakness. There is no freedom to test the boundaries.

The emphasis in this child's life is that of performance. The message is, "You are what you do".

Children in these homes tend to either rebel or conform. However, both are driven by a conformist mentality, they are not inner-driven, that is by their own thoughts, understands, wants, and desires.

There is often a high degree of guilt. These children often obey the rules, perform well, succeed through hard work but they lack passion, playfulness, vision, and adventure.

## YES/YES Home

In this home the children are provided for in abundance. Love is often expressed through the provision of stuff. Love is often overly protective, possessive, and indulgent. The child has a sense of being special. However, they also have a sense of control, they are manipulative, knowing that their threat of withdrawal is very effective.

Children in these homes are often self-centered with a sense of entitlement.

These children will often act out, getting into trouble to see if anyone cares and will respond. They are often poised and confident but lack a strength of conviction and character that develops through confronting consistent boundaries. This home often leads to passive dependent children.

## YES/NO Home

There is a balance between the two questions. There are boundaries that are enforced, but the enforcement is done with a sense of respect and dignity for the child. There are times of great fun and laughter. The child is given freedom within the form to violate the comfort of the parents. The child is given a relational freedom to test the boundaries. The child has a sense of delight in the world and a willingness to be adventuresome.

These are not perfect children. They will test the limit to determine boundaries. These children can be precocious.

Because children struggle with foolishness there can be a sense of entitlement or arrogance in these children. Like all children they will resist learning responsibility. Immaturity still functions.

## Questions to Ponder

In which kind of home were you raised? If it was a combination home, which parent fit into which box? What was the effect of being raised in that kind of home? None of us are perfect parents. When you fail, into which box do you fit? How do you communicate, ‘No I do not love you.’ How do you communicate, ‘Yes you can get your own way.’ What kind of response do you see in your children?

Am I willing to move towards my child and maintain the forms in the face of inherent painfulness? Am I free not to require my child to move towards me and like me?

## The Expression of Foolishness

	Compulsive Compliant	Defiant Distant	Passive Dependent
Core Assumption	Life depends on correcting me. All the difficulties in my life are my fault.	Life depends on denying I need anything. My life will work independently	Life depends on getting someone to rescue me. Life works best with no responsibility or effort.
Core Image	Shameful	Abandoned	Helpless
Basic Strategy	I will seek to meet the expectations of others in order to avoid a sense of disgust or contempt	I will escape expectations through distance and adverse reactions	I must alter the expectations of others. I will be the exception to the rules. I will find a way to manipulate you into doing it.
Functional Behavior	Performance: The more flawless, the better. Productivity is the key	Create excitement. Find fulfillment in getting a reaction out of people.	Display an attitude of inadequacy: Get others running to take care of me.

<b>Goal</b>	Establish Superiority: Security is found in being better than.	Power/Revenge Significance is found in being the best at being the worst.	Attention: The more I am the center of attention the more significant I am.
<b>Posture</b>	Rescuer: Security is found in being useful and needed	Persecutor: Security is found in keeping people at a safe distance	Victim: Security is found in giving the responsibility to others
<b>Effective Parenting</b>	Develop a sense of autonomy/independence. Provide the joy of free choice. Don't let them work for anything	Maintain clear bounds. Allow emotions. Avoid power struggles. Develop a safe dependency and need for others	Short-circuit the manipulation. Hold them accountable for actions and responsibilities. Don't do or allow others to do for them.

### Questions to Ponder

In which of these categories do I see my children? Where do I see my own life in relation to these characteristics? Where do I see their wrong thinking being demonstrated? Fill in the first six blocks of the above chart with what you desire your child to be. How would they act and think?

### Assignment

Come to the session next week prepared to discuss your observations.

Watch your children and determine into which category you would place them. Make a list of three behaviors that indicate this thinking pattern. List three responses you will initiate change their thinking. What does their action say about needed changes in your parenting?

Pray daily for yourself, your spouse, your children, and the other members of the study.

It is recommended that you read chapters 6-8 in Raising Great Kids.

## C. Developing Consequences

### 1. Four basic techniques of discipline.

- a. Natural consequences: These are the out workings of the event. The parent does nothing but allow the consequences to fall upon the child. This is not easy.
  1. They must be able to handle these consequences.
  2. They must not cause great physical or psychological harm.
  3. Parents may need to moderate the consequences.
  4. These can be created.

N.B. This is the reality of the gospel. The consequence of our sins was death, eternal separation from God. (Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death.) This was a punishment that was too great for us to bear. Therefore, Jesus took upon Himself our sins. (Isaiah 53:4 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him.) He paid the price of separation from God so that we don't have to. But in love, the Father allowed the temporal, natural, consequences to remain.

- b. The withdrawal of privileges.
  1. It teaches that privileges are lost as a consequence of wrong behavior.
  2. When possible they should be associated with the wrong choices.

3. That which is forfeited is something that is meaningful to the child.
4. The younger the child, the more immediate the consequences.
5. Some children will use indifference to attempt to eliminate the effectiveness of this consequence.
6. Helpful when dealing with older children.

c. The addition of tasks.

1. It teaches that wrong choices cause additional work and effort.
2. The chore must be something that is distasteful.
3. The activity can be something to lighten your load.
4. The task should be associated with the violation.
5. For irresponsible behavior, the tasks can be lighthearted and fun.
6. The younger the child the more immediate the consequence.
7. There is a danger of associating the task with punishment.
8. Helpful when dealing with older children.

d. Corporal Consequences.

1. Spanking is always an event, it is not done spur of the moment, and it is done privately.
2. Spanking ends at about 11 and diminishes as you get close to that age.
3. Corporal punishment is only applied to that which was created for this purpose (The muscular gluteus maximum). This does not involving slapping or other physical responses.
- 4. There should never be marks!!!!!!!!!!!!!! If there are, you are punishing too hard!**
5. The spanking must be received.
6. Recommend the use of the hands.
7. Never more than a few swats.

**Question to Ponder**

Think of something that your child did this week that required a consequence? What did they do? What is a natural consequence, a task added consequence, a privilege withdrawn consequence? What other creative responses could you have had? What are three things within the disobedience that you can acknowledge? (A wonderful book on this topic, written by a secular writer is, "Children: The Challenge" by Rudolf Dreikurs published by Hawthorn/Dutton.)

2. Prerequisites to effective discipline.

- a. Discipline must be done with the right motive

1. Discipline is done out of a commitment to the well-being of the child.
  2. Discipline is done with teaching as the primary focus (“I want you to learn that when you violate the rules there are consequences. I seek to love you by providing you with the opportunity to learn wisdom.”)
  3. Discipline is done in the knowledge that I can not control the behavior or the attitude, only the consequences
  4. Must eliminate motives of revenge, control, protection of image, shame, etc.
- b. Discipline must demonstrate love.
1. Must always avoid those words, actions, and attitudes that communicate a lack of love, respect, or acceptance. (This involves such things as slapping, yelling, obscene language, derogatory words, comparisons, public humiliation. This also involves using such words as never, always, or asking questions a child can not answer and which only humiliate. “What is wrong with you? Haven’t I taught you better? What do you think you were doing?” All of these are destructive to the child.)
  2. Must demonstrate the time and effort necessary to discipline well.
    - a. Take time to explain the rule that was violated.
    - b. Take time to explain the violation.

- c. Take time to explain the purpose of your discipline. (I am doing this, not because I'm angry, embarrassed, or hurt, but rather, because I love you and want you to learn that when you violate the rules there are always consequences. Consequences are not the absence of love, but the presence of it.)
- d. Take time to explain that living in conformity to the standards leads to fulfillment in life.
- e. Don't apologize or ask permission ("I'm not sorry, I'm sad").
- f. Provide acceptance after the consequences.
- g. Pray together.

(The more severe the consequence the more necessary this is. This process should always be followed when corporal punishment is involved.)

3. Seek in the action those aspects that can be acknowledge and praised.

### **Question to Ponder**

What are some of the ways you have seen others communicate a lack of love in their discipline? What are some of the ways in which you struggle in this area?

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- c. Discipline must involve sensible application.
    - 1. The discipline must show the relationship between the violation or irresponsibility and the consequences.
      - a. The younger the child the shorter the time.
      - b. This is the purpose for explanation.
      - c. This is the place of creative discipline.
      - d. This is best done by natural consequences.
    - 2. The level of defiance determines the level of consequences.
      - a. The breaking of the form does not include mistakes, curiosity, outgoingness, exuberance, shyness, and accidents. These may however include natural consequences or the application of a form.
      - b. The level of response is determined by the level of defiance.
        - 1. God allows for the lack of understanding of the rules. (Numbers 15:22,24,27)
        - 2. However, God is severe in the face of defiance. (Numbers 15:30-36) It is not the size of the sin that is the determining factor, but the motivation of defiance.

3. The application of consequences must always uphold the dignity and respect of the child.

### **Question to Ponder**

What is your reaction to the example of the man picking up sticks?  
Do most of your child's responses involve this kind of defiance?  
What kind of discipline are you most skilled at, how about your spouse? Which type do you find most difficult?

### **Assignment**

Come to the session next week prepared to discuss your observations.

Chose one misbehavior of your child's this week. List three types of consequences that you could give in each of the categories except corporal? How much effort did this take you? What does this say about giving good consequences?

Pray daily for yourself, your spouse, your children, and the other members of the study.

It is recommended that you read chapters 9,10 in Raising Great Kids.

## **D. Identifying Manipulative Foolishness.**

### **1. The reality of hidden foolishness.**

- a. At times the defiance is unclear, the child learns that direct defiance is not effective and so the foolishness goes underground.
- b. The child is still attempting to get their own way but it is done so in a devious way.
- c. Example: You must wear dress shoes to church.
  1. I can't find my shoes.
  2. These shoes are dumb; they're ugly.
  3. The shoes are all torn up; they are not wearable.
- d. Must remember teleology (all chosen behaviors have a goal).
  1. The hidden goal of reward without responsibility.
  2. The hidden goal of power (power over adults).
  3. The hidden goal of revenge.
  4. The hidden goal of withdrawal.

### **Questions to Ponder**

What are the behaviors of your child that are not defiance but yet seem wrong? What is your emotional response? How do you react to these behaviors?

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## 2. The Goal Of Reward Without Responsibility.

- a. This is motivated by a legitimate desire for a child's world to provide what they desire. But, the child is unwilling to work to meet those desires.
- b. Detecting this goal.
  1. Child shows no concern about the consequences of the behavior.
  2. Parents act like the child's servant constantly picking up, making up, bailing out, or doing the child's work.
  3. The child makes what appears to be sincere promises but never follows through or completes the task.
- c. Common parental response.
  1. The parent is making up or compensating for the child.
  2. There are no consequences for the behavior, often in response to the pleas for leniency or accusations of unfairness by the child.
  3. A growing frustration and irritation.
- d. Effective Biblical Response.
  1. Determine to not take responsibility for the child's behavior or consequences.
  2. Determine whether the behavior is outside of the forms established by you.

3. If the answer is yes:
  - a. Re-establish the limits. (This is a clear violation of this standard within our home.)
  - b. Allow natural consequences if the child is not too greatly harmed.
  - c. Determine added consequences.
3. If the answer is no.
  - a. Allow the natural consequences to impact them unless it is overly destructive.
  - b. Determine whether this is worth the fight to make a form or standard.

### **Questions to Ponder**

Where do you see this behavior in your children? How do you usually respond? What is your emotional reaction to this behavior?

3. The Goal Of Power.
  - a. The motivation behind this goal.
    1. There is a legitimate desire to be noticed and interacted with by the parents. (Negative attention is better than inattention.)
    2. There is a legitimate desire to have impact in the life of the parent. (Let me know that what I do effects you.)

3. Constructed in response to the awareness of the parent's need to control providing the child great emotional power.
  4. Attempting to violate a person's will leads to a new and illegitimate sense of personal fulfillment: Power!
- b. Detecting this goal.
1. The child's behavior has no clear purpose other than to irritate.
  2. This is the place of whining, pouting, and complaining. The behavior simply wears you down.
  3. There is a growing compulsion in the parent to end the behavior: (A compulsion to lecture, bribe, persuade, anything to stop the behavior.)
  4. There is a growing sense of anger, frustration, or pressure in response to the behavior.
- c. Common parental response.
1. Power struggle: Escalating the means of control, often through the use of anger or coaxing.
  2. There is often a loss of control by the parents expressed by a raised voice or empty threat.

d. Effective Biblical Response.

1. A parent must be aware of the escalating emotional response and its indication of a power struggle.
2. A parent must change the goal from controlling the behavior or lack of behavior to one of controlling the consequences. (Willingness to stay involved even in the midst of the painful behavior of the child.)
3. Determine whether the behavior is in or out of the form and provide the appropriate response.

**Question to Ponder**

Where do you see this type of behavior in your child? What is that behavior? What is your typical emotional response? How can you respond to this in a way that does not result in a power struggle?

4. The Goal Of Revenge.

a. The motivation behind this goal.

1. This is a provoked child. (Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.)
2. There is a hidden desire to make the parents pay.
3. The child senses a lack of relationship and love. The child is responding to a failure to allow either separateness or a lack of true caring.

Your interaction is to control me. You are unconcerned with my feelings or desires.



Nothing I do truly impacts you. There is no depth of relationship.

4. I will get my revenge either through rebellion, sullen uncooperative responses, or self-destructive behavior where the child is saying, "I will hurt you by hurting me."
5. This is a serious problem. This is where outside help is needed to address the situation. The parent will need to take a critical and painful look at their interactions with the child.

b. Detecting this goal.

1. Chronic and usually escalating patterns of disruption, disrespect, and non-cooperation.
2. Child threatens rebellious or destructive behavior.
3. There is a real fear about the future of this child and the relationship with them.
4. There is in the parent a desire for revenge against the child for what they are doing.

c. Common parental response.

1. Panic: Giving in to the growing demands, a blind eye to the destructive behavior and capitulation for the sake of maintaining the relationship.

2. Increased authoritarianism, I am you father, I am your mother, you will do this.
3. Revenge: Finding ways to make the child pay for the hurt they have caused. Often through emotional withdrawal.

d. Effective Biblical Response.

1. Deal with your own separateness and wholeness apart from a relationship with the child.
  - a. My life can and will be meaningful without a relationship with you.
  - b. Your actions are painful to me but they will not destroy my life.
  - c. Avoid statements like, "I did this all for you, how could you? Or After all I have done you would?"
2. Be willing to listen and accept the child's anger.
  - a. Be willing to explore where there has been failure in understanding and respecting your child. Asking the question "Where have I significantly missed what is deeply important to my child?"
  - b. Do not denigrate the child's anger or demand authoritative standards. ("You can't say that to me.")

3. Radically re-establish commitment to your child: "You can violate my standards, hurt me in many ways, but I will remain committed to doing what is best for your growth and development."
4. In the context of renewed relationship re-establish the proper form or boundaries.

### **Question to Ponder**

As a teenager, did you experience this type of interaction with your parent or did someone you know? How did the parents respond? What was the outcome? How would you respond to this situation?

#### 5. The Goal Of Withdrawal.

- a. The motivation behind this goal.
  1. The child is aware of an inability to live up to the expectation of others.
  2. Failure and rejection on any level is unacceptable.
  3. Therefore the child determines that I will live a life of withdrawal and isolation.
  4. The child lacks the internal sense of strength to deal with the pains and losses of life.
- b. Detecting this goal.
  1. The child stubbornly refuses to be involved with people or activities that should be enjoyable.

2. The parent aches in response to the pain and dominating fear in the child's life.
  3. This can be a sign of childhood depression.
- c. Common parental response.
1. Pressure: Forcing the child through coercion or threats to be involved.
  2. Capitulation: Not challenging the child to move beyond the fears and hurts.
- d. Effective Biblical Response.
1. Accept the child where they are, providing opportunity for them to express their fear or hurt without rejection or belittling.
  2. Provide strong encouragement and supportiveness. Let the child know that you believe in them and their abilities.
  3. Help the child to see their demandingness in relationship ("no one can disappoint me") or their unrealistic self-demands ("I can never fail").
  4. Teach them how to handle rejection and failure with proper self-talk and responses.
  5. Strongly encourage exposure to the slight presence of feared situations. If possible make these situations where they can not fail. Use praises and rewards to encourage.

6. With absolute and repeated refusal, slight discipline (never corporal) can be used to encourage them.

Have you known a discouraged kid? What was your response to them? How would you respond as a parent?

### **Assignment**

Come to the session next week prepared to discuss your observations.

Observe your children and find two behaviors that fit into the first two categories. List how you responded to the behavior? Was the behavior outside of your forms? Is the behavior inside the forms? What behavior of your children gets the most irritated or frustrated response from you? What does this say about your goal?

Did you observe any behaviors that indicate revenge? How did you respond? How could you listen more effectively to your child?

Is your child showing signs of discouragement? How are you motivating them to involvement? What is the source of their fear? Pray daily for yourself, your spouse, your children, and the other members of the study. It is recommended that you read chapters 11-13 in Raising Great Kids.

## Task Two : Instilling Wisdom Though Mercy and Truth

### II. Task One: Instilling Wisdom.

#### A. The Difficulty of the Task.

##### 1. This task is less immediate.

- a. The evidences of an undisciplined child are easy to see. However, the evidence of an untaught child is often delayed.
- b. We are too often blind to our own struggles and what we are really teaching our children.
  1. Our behaviors speak more powerfully than our words.
  2. We are often blind to our own motivations, but our children pick them up.
  3. This is the area of core convictions. To discover these, it requires careful observation and communication.

##### 2. Softening your child.

- a. This is the process of undermining your child's commitment to self-centered, self-sufficient living.
  1. It takes place when our children observe us living in ways that contradict selfishness and self-protection.

2. It involves repentance in the face of error.
3. It involves involvement in the face of pain and rejection.
4. It involves grace and mercy as well as firmness and commitment.
5. It involves looking below the surface to the motivation.

### **Question to Ponder**

When have you seen your attitudes in your child and it shocked you? Where did they learn that attitude or action? What kinds of opportunities do you have to soften your child?

3. Strengthening the child.
  - a. Informal teaching (Deuteronomy 6:6-8).

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

1. Very little of the Lord's teaching was sermonic.
2. This is a life long relationship of small opportunities to demonstrate and proclaim truth, often without direct reference to the Bible.

3. Much of this is applying the Scripture to my life, not the child's, showing the child through my responses.
  - b. Formal teaching.
    1. There are times for formal instruction.
    2. This can be divided into fun teaching involving games and activities and teaching. (Meal time and bed time is great for this.)
    3. May require the parent to learn.
4. Strengthening the adolescent.
  - a. This involves anticipating and creating problems that need to be addressed.
  - b. This involves inoculation.
    1. Exposing them in small doses to the things that are harmful.
    2. This is done with the support system of the home to aid them.
    3. This involves discussing and dealing with fearful and painful things knowing that the information may be misused.

### **Assignment**

Find three times this week when you can respond to your child in a way that violates their self-centered assumptions. What was the response of your child. Name three opportunities to teach your children in an informal way. What was the situation? What was the lesson? Pray daily for yourself, your spouse, your children, and the other members of the study. It is recommended that you read chapters 1-3 in How Children Raise Parents.

## Task Three : Provide Safety and Security Through Grace and Love

### III Task Three: Providing Relationship.

#### A. This is the building of relationship with your child.

##### 1. Building relationship involves time.

###### a. Planned time.

1. Involves focusing on each child where they are the center of your attention. Time available just for them.
2. Involves specific events which reflect the unique interest of the child. Doing that which is age appropriate. Doing what they want, not what you want.
3. Involves vulnerability where you open up about your own life, your dreams, doubts disappointments. Let them ask you some personal and probing questions. These are important types of interactions for adolescence.

###### b. Consistent Time

1. This is the time that your children can count on. Establishing this when they are young carries over when they are older.

2. This is meal time, family worship, yearly vacations, Saturday morning, Friday night...

3. This is the time of conversation and relaxation.

c. Expanding Time

This is allowing your children to see you in the wide expanse of your life. Taking them to work, involving them in appropriate social interaction, allowing them to see you in worship.

d. Available Time.

Your child needs to know that there is very little that takes precedence over your promises to them and their legitimate cries in time of hurt and emergency. To the best of my ability I am there for you. When I fail I must be willing to accept and acknowledge your hurt and anger.

Time is one of the most important expressions of love to a child. It is not enough to simply spend "quality time". There is also a need in a child's life for quantity time.

2. Physical Interaction.

a. This is the hugs and kisses that a parent gives to a child.

b. This does not diminish when the child gets older.

1. You must honor the child's growing sense of uncomfortably.

2. Find subversive means of touch. A hand on the shoulder, a lean on the sofa. These have impact without violating the comfort.

**B. This involves the providing of acceptance.**

1. You must accept the uniqueness of your child.
  - a. They must be allowed to act differently than you
  - b. They must be allowed to think different than you.
    1. Do you have to prove that you are right?
    2. Do you belittle the thinking of the child?
2. You must accept the communication of your child.
  - a. This is an area that many seemingly good parents fail.
  - b. This is an area of great blindness. It is difficult to hear your own responses, they are so ingrained.
  - c. You must avoid those responses that cut short good communication.
    1. Must avoid global declarations (“You always, you never”).
    2. Must avoid rehearsing declarations that attack from the past (“you don’t learn, remember last time when you...”).

3. Must avoid assumptions before they are checked out (“I know what you mean”).
4. Must avoid communication breakers.
  - a. The defensive or explaining response”
    1. “Dad I don’t want to play football any more.”
    2. “It wasn’t my idea for you to play football. Or I thought you wanted to, I didn’t make you.”
    3. The feelings of the child are not accepted. Instead a self justifying excuse is given.
    4. This communicates that I am not concerned about you, just about how I appear in this.
  - b. The quick apology.
    1. “Mom I was hurt but what you said last night.”
    2. “Well I’m sorry.”
    3. Before the depth of the hurt or pain is explored, the apology cuts off any further discussion.
    4. This communicates that the comfort of the relationship is more important than the person’s feelings.

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c. The attack back.

1. "Dad I don't like you going through my room."
2. "If you were more trustworthy I wouldn't have to."
3. The basic concept is that you hurt me with your statement and now hurt is placed back upon the person. The person pays for broaching this subject.
4. This communicates clearly that there are certain areas that if discussed will result in a great emotional or relational cost.

d. The quick and unsolicited advice.

1. "It hurts that I told him I wanted to just be friends and then he stopped calling."
2. "You just need to be less forward and open." Or "that's no way to talk to a guy, let me give you some pointers."
3. The advice is given when it is not wanted or the complete emotional situation is not explored.

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4. This communicates that I will deal with you at the level of my adequacy not where you are really struggling.
- e. Apparent disdain or contempt
1. "Daddy, my doll just broke."
  2. "Honey that's no big deal, now stop your crying."
  3. The emotion is belittled, communicating the adult's unwillingness to understand the impact on the child.
  4. This communicates that the child's world is unimportant.
- f. Correcting the behavior.
1. "Mom, I feel so lonely."
  2. "If you just spent more time with the family you wouldn't feel that way."
  3. The emotion is brushed aside, the internal struggle of the child is not examined.
  4. This communicates that performance is what is important and not the heart.

N.B. All of these responses reject the heart issues of the child in some way. Before all of the issues are explored a response is given. All of these responses are manipulative in nature and seek to change the child rather than understand the child. They are self-centered and self-protective in nature.

5. Must pursue communication extenders.

a. The Clarifying response.

1. "Dad I don't want to play football any more."
2. "What about it don't you like? How much do you not like it?"
3. The feeling is acknowledged and the uniqueness and depth of the emotion are being explored.
4. This communicates that I care about what is happening inside and want to know more. I am not threatened by your emotion.

b. The Exploring Response

1. "Mom I was hurt by what you said last night."
2. "What was it that I said." Or "Are there other times that I make you feel that way?"
3. Demonstrates a willingness to explore the depth of the child. Don't have to hide what is inside.

4. This communicates interest in the child's deepest parts.

c. The Extending Response

1. "Dad I don't like you going through my room."
2. "Son, I suspect that you feel other things as well, lets talk."  
Or "When I'm in that kind of situation I sometimes feel \_\_\_\_\_, I wonder if you feel that also?"
3. This allows connection between the child and your own emotional response.
4. This communicates that you are not alone in feeling like that.

These responses provide opportunity for further discussion. They are vulnerable responses that open us up to hearing painful and difficult things. They are responses that allow us to build a path to the deepest parts of our children's lives and heart.