

PRACTICAL PARENTING

**BIBLICAL GUIDELINES FOR RAISING
CAPABLE COMPETENT CHILDREN**



BRANDY A COFFEE MARKS

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**Published by Doctrine of the Cross
Vancouver Washington
www.dotcross.org**

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Printed in the United States

ISBN: 0-9841522-1-0

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Doctrine of the Cross Publishing

Practical Parenting--1st ed--

Vancouver WA

www.dotcross.org

THE CONTENTS

Shown in sections

There are eight stepping stones

Watch each and learn before moving on.



Before addressing the individual sections let me emphasize the one critical element that often goes unmentioned. There is no program, book, or learning process that will help you or your children get into heaven. The only thing that makes one particle of difference is whether or not your children know Christ Jesus and they know what he did for them. Without Jesus in our heart and our lives, the rest is meaningless.

PART 1: Developmental Guide What you can expect from your child based on their age and age-appropriate activities to do with them.

PART 2: Gods Ten Commandments These are reviewed as behaviors and suggestions for how to integrate them into your life and parenting style.

PART 3: Communication: a Story of Jesus's Childhood; Roadblocks to Good Communication, and The ABC's of Anger.

PART 4: Choices to Challenge How to help a child learn to think for their self by giving responsibilities and allowing learning experiences.

PART 5: Power Struggles Mistakes that parents make and strategies to resolve conflict without power struggles so children obey.

PART 6: Discipline: Problem prevention, a resolution planning, strategies that promote success, and learning from consequences

PART 7: Teens. Not the Enemy When their business is your business; setting rules; and how to discipline to gain obedience and respect.

PART 8: Bedtime Boundaries. Understand your child's sleep needs, develop a structure, issues to consider, a plan for success

If you have domestic violence issues, this is intended as a supplement to court services only. The purpose is in parental improvement but it will not solve all your parenting problems. What it does is show you ways to increase your awareness, learn new parenting skills, discipline correctly, and learn how to communicate to resolve conflict; however, you alone are responsible for follow through and an improved outcome!

The process takes time for practical improvement. Nothing worthwhile is attained easily. Are you willing to give a little time and effort? Problems begin if we are not prepared in skills and emotional readiness. So, be prepared or completed before moving on!

Remember to first tell your children about Jesus, God's only Son who came to earth as a human. Born of a virgin, he suffered and died not only for the sins of believers or Christians but for all mankind - all people. His death on the cross is what makes **what we do on earth** worthwhile. Emphasize that it is obedience to his Lordship that matters because our life here on earth is for the sole purpose of glorifying God. Parents must teach their children what that means and then train their children to behave in a way that will give God glory.



INTRODUCTION

On a good day, enjoy yourself; on a bad day, examine your conscience.
God does both so we don't take anything for granted. (Eccl 7:14)

When I first saw this Scripture it gave me pause for thought, as it should every one. How often we take God's grace and mercy for granted and fail to examine our actions, and ask, "Does my behavior glorify God?" Jesus said, "In this world you will have troubles but I bring you my peace" so we need be anxious for nothing. These verses seem to contradict one another, but do they and what does this have to do with parenting?

This verse in Ecclesiastes is a reminder that our children respond to us their parents and role model according to the behavioral examples we set, and they reflect the emotions we express. Being calm, cool, and collected in difficult situations and responding in love teaches our children to be calm, cool, collected in trying situations, responding in love.

Jesus wanted us to know that problems exist even when we do well. Yet, if we keep our focus on him, we can still have peace of mind and heart.

Often when things go wrong, parents seem to get upset with the child more easily. Instead, rather than be upset over a child's exuberant behavior alter your attention and get into *God's Word* with praise and prayer. This is one way to redirect your attention; it works. And with *God* all things, even the impossible child can become an obedient child.

To help you understand better how to achieve this goal, this text explores child rearing practices in a step by step process. First is child development discussed in its stages, then communication (Luke 2:42-52 explores Jesus' childhood where Mary and Joseph ran into a situation they had to confront). The exuberant behavior of a child can lead to trouble if not managed well and the way in which they responded led to increased understanding and improved behavior rather than conflict. Thus, this story provides a strong example of helpful communication.

When communication does not work and conflict and power struggles ensue, knowing how to manage these difficult situations is important and that requires discipline and natural consequences. These excellent skills help parents to manage misbehavior that always seems to crop up. In the final chapter we explore a child's sleep problems, and helping you and your child to have peaceful restful nights.

I recommend keeping a notebook handy as you read the material in this book, and make notes about problems you have encountered with your children. Also, think about how you might use the strategies suggested in your own parenting. Read Scripture for better understanding and let *God's Word* speak to you, but more important, practice what he teaches.

A DEVELOPMENTAL GUIDE

What we teach, how much we teach, and when we teach a child depends upon their age and level of maturity.



This chapter covers human development, and how being a godly role model helps children to develop spiritual maturity along with human developmental skills. In Christian maturation there are different stages just as there are in human development.

Spiritual maturity like that of an infant, we initially need milk for food but, as we learn and grow we are able to eat meat. Thus, with spiritual maturity we are able to chew the Word and gain nourishment with less human guidance relying more on the presence of the Holy Spirit.



This book is assembled using a very simple process, so you are fed with the mother's milk of a new lamb for easy learning. Now, let's take a look at ways to teach a child.

TEACHINGS

Hopefully, you are reading this with other parents and/or your spouse and having discussions. So, to begin, let's discuss the following:

- Out of the heart come evil thoughts (Mark 7.21).
- A house divided will soon be destroyed (Luke 11.17).

We teach our children in thought, word and deed and, as parents we are accountable to God for what we teach and how we teach our children. We can be a mature responsible person or immature and irresponsible.

Like Jesus, we must be godly models so our children believe in him (John 1.8). Teach your children about Jesus and then be more like Him. "Be perfect, as your Father in Heaven is". (Matthew 5.48) God loves and forgives and has been there for us in our rebellion and repentance and final submission to his will. So, we can be there for our children, loving them no matter what and forgiving them when they repent and finally submit to our *righteous* will.

Luke 1:6 says that Zachariah and Elizabeth were righteous; they did not merely go through the motions in obeying God; they backed up lip service

with inward obedience. Unlike the religious leaders whom Jesus called hypocrites, Zechariah and Elizabeth did not just talk it, they walked the talk, and that is why they are called "righteous in God's eyes."

We do the same so children can understand righteousness over time as they see us sacrifice our pride by obeying God then, in asking for and receiving forgiveness for sin, we repent or change our ways submitting to his will.

AGE-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Now let's explore activities you can do with your children and what children can expect from you; this means you must spend time with your child and get to know them, building a close relationship. Be there for your children when they seek you out, looking for attention.

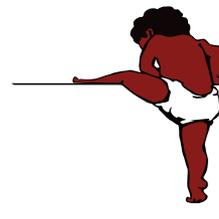
Being present when a child seeks you out builds trust, as when we seek God. "Those who know your name put their trust in you; for you, Oh Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you" (Psalm 9:10). Be there for your children just as God is there when you call upon him (Jeremiah 29:11).

MATURITY LEVEL

Children must be mature enough to do the tasks you give them. If you give them tasks that are above their ability level, they may feel incompetent and may not be willing to take more risks. If you give tasks that are too easy they may get bored or think that you have no trust in them. Children who succeed feel competent and are willing to take greater risks. Those who do not feel good about their self may take risks that are illegal, immoral, or life threatening, such as drugs, promiscuous sex, suicide, and others.

What children learn at every stage of growth has an impact on all future behaviors and how well they succeed in the world. If parents train a child "in the way they should go [while still young] they will not depart from it [even when old]" (Proverbs 22:6).

First are ages 1 - 2 beginning on the next page.



AGE 1 - 2

The first year of a child's life generally they depend on their parents for everything. Then, at age two, suddenly they want to be this very independent person and discover the world. At age two, this is the time to let them say "no" and go on adventures. Watch that they don't go too far. Allowing these experiences helps them become strong, secure adults. In other words, allow your child the freedom to explore their world but within safe boundaries!

Letting them say "no" teaches the child that it's okay to say "no" while firmly insisting on limits. For example, "Climbing on the cabinets is not okay, but you can climb on the sofa (or another safe play area)."

Jesus clearly had the freedom to roam, although he was a lot older than a two-year-old. Still he took too much liberty and had to be reminded of his parent's authority. In Part 3 we will explore the skills Mary employed to communicate effectively with Jesus (see Luke 2:51).

Two-year-olds really are easiest although, their stubborn behavior seems impossible at times. Yet all they need is the freedom to take risks but *not life threatening risks!*

Instead of saying "No" take time to show them what is safe or acceptable for them. Keep an eye on them as they explore virtually everything within reach and a few things beyond their reach.



The greatest learning that takes place at this age is simple walking or learning to stand on their-own two feet. Now this sounds like a cute saying but we are taking it quite literal. Children must do certain tasks in order to develop the muscles and coordination necessary for other activities later. However, if you rush over, pick them up and make a huge fuss every time they fall down, they learn dependence not independence and their thinking muscles do not develop properly.

Learning to do difficult things develops courage and problem solving skills. When you allow the child to figure out simple tasks like crawling and walking when they are little, that encourages children to think things through or problem solve difficulties as they learn. Thus, the child is more willing to take risks and to develop increasing maturity.

NOTES:

P RE-SCHOOL: AGE 3 - 4



Children at this age, learn discipline by doing for themselves within safe limits. So provide prudent instruction, so your children do not "cease to hear the discipline, *only* to stray from your words of knowledge". (Pro 19:27).

Nagging and criticism will drive a child away from you and eventually home faster than anything. As they get bigger and older they also get better at learning and making choices. So, once again, teach children the right way to live and they will not depart from it.

While it may seem nonessential this is a good time to give a small allowance so as to encourage financial discipline. Establish a reasonable amount and suggestions for saving and spending: "It should last you a week. You can use it for comics and gum. You can also save it to buy bigger things".

Consistency in follow through with what you say and do also sets a pattern they can follow for spending and saving. When they spend unwisely and the allowance does not last then, saying "no," teaches them to say no to their own impulses, and their friends/peer group later on. If they spend their allowance before the week is up and you help them out with more money, they learn nothing other than how to use you. Do not lecture about their spending; let them learn from experience. Long explanations are wasted; they are not ready for it; keep it simple!

Children learn to think for themselves by making choices and making mistakes when you allow them the learning experience. God gave freewill, the freedom to choose at will, whatever and whomever - wisely or not - and we should have the good sense to do the same for our children. Although, you do not let a child run out in front of a car just to teach them the danger of playing in the street.

Children also need to be taught or instructed in what is biblically correct. Proverbs is a book of instruction for gaining knowledge and wisdom.

See Appendix A for Proverbs for a Godly Relationship with Parents and Appendix B for Proverbs for Parents.

ACTIVITIES FOR 3 - 4 YEAR-OLDS

3 - 4 year-olds need time with you reading to them, playing, talking, and teaching them the right way to live for God. Warn them about harmful substances and activities. *You don't teach a child the danger of cars by letting them run into the street. And you don't teach children the danger of alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs by letting them try them!*

Children need you to teach them about alcohol, cigarettes, illegal drugs and it is best if they do not learn by seeing you using them. They also need to know about medicines and the harm they can do - if they are not used right. Food is also a good topic. So talk about food groups and good food choices. Of course, if you eat healthy meals and have regular meals where everyone is generally present, then you already are on the right track.

Teach children moderation in exercise and control of the appetites both by discussion and by what you eat and how much you eat. Discuss exercise and sports, their interests and how those activities can help them stay in shape and form good lifetime habits.

If you do not have household or family discussions, sit down together and talk over family rules and decisions, and then, follow the rules yourself. Typical household or family rules generally focus on schoolwork/homework, bedtime activities, age-related chores, drug use, school and play friends, television and radio time, and most important, penalties for misbehavior. These will be covered in greater depth in a later section.

If you are a parent who teaches children to live correctly but you yourself do not follow the same guidelines, then your children are learning hypocrisy and not good healthy living. Parents who are hypocrites create conflict in their children. On the one hand they want to obey you but when they see you doing the very thing they were told not to do, it creates inner conflict and eventual disrespect and rebellion.

My children learned good and bad behaviors from me and it was evident in both their lives. My own drug use and its devastating effects taught them to avoid drugs because I talked about the consequences they could see in my life. Thus, it was a good reason to not use and avoid these consequences. But because I did not take marijuana or alcohol use serious, I never warned them about it so they did not learn about the dangers and both of my sons had problems with alcohol and marijuana. So, teach your children from your own example and reduce some of the conflict in their lives.

SCHOOL AGE 5-9

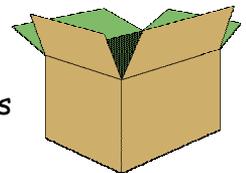
At this stage, children like life and they like school, usually. They don't have a clue what the future means, as they are in between fact and fantasy of life. They need rules, guidelines and information to make well-informed choices about life. Discuss everything with them in the here-and-now, not the past or future. Focus on good health and being a healthy role model, one they can be proud to call their parent.

This is the age when they need to know specifics - what is legal and illegal and why. Generally, legal is because society believes the danger is within acceptable limits. Illegal substances are considered dangerous perhaps, because time has shown that they have caused considerable harm. Alcohol is dangerous as its long term effects have serious consequences for ones physical and mental health. Also, driving under the influence of alcohol can result in death, yours and/or other persons. Drugs are dangerous no matter what they are, and can be both addictive and deadly.

Nonetheless, there are drugs or medicines that are acceptable and foster improved health and well-being. Discuss which foods and medicines are okay and which they should try to avoid. Food with chemical preservatives and coloring agents, other additives, or high sugar content, can be harmful.

Children need information to make well-informed choices. A co-worker once told my sister—who had apologized for lack of certain knowledge—that we only know what we know. So, teach children to ask questions of everyone, even authority figures; not all are legitimate; gather as much information as needed to make a healthy choice. Without the information our children will not be prepared for the real world.

What do they need to know about a person, movie, CD, or anything else before deciding if it's right for them? "What's in the box?" (the unknown) means different things to different people.



The best person to teach a child about safety is you the parent. There is no perfect age for parents should teach children personal safety. A child's ability to comprehend and practice skills, as you know by now is affected by age, education, and their development.

As noted, listening is the number one skill a parent can learn that will help protect their children. Know your children's daily activities and habits. Listen to what they like and what they don't like.

Let your children know they can talk to you about any situation. I was not a great parent, but the one thing I did for my oldest son was let him know he could talk to me and be heard. For the longest time he was his silent self, then one day, he came and said, "I need to talk" and did, for forty minutes while I sat and just listened without comment. To this day, my son feels comfortable coming and talking to me about almost anything.

Reassure your children that their safety is your number one priority. Set boundaries about places they may go, people they may see, and things they may do. Reinforce their using the "buddy system" and let them know that it's okay to say "No". Tell your children to trust their instincts.

INVOLVEMENT

Get involved with your children and know where they are at all times. Your children need to check in with you if they change in plans. Let them know you are not trying to be a snoop, but that you are concerned for their safety. There is no substitute for your attention.¹ For more information on this important topic, check out the website cited in the footnote.

Do they know home, school and social rules about drug and alcohol use, and differences? Home rules and what you say versus what you actually do. School rules: how do they differ from home rules? Social rules: how do they differ from school and home rules? Just because the law allows certain activities does not mean you find them acceptable.

Abortion is one example where the law makes murder legal or acceptable, but for many, it is still murder and God commands us not to kill.

As children begin to take responsibility for their selves they also develop self-reliance and their individuality or who they are as a person.

¹ http://www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojdp/psc_english_02/page3.html

TEACHING YOUR CHILDREN

Use family time together to teach by asking questions and discussion where you actually listen to what a child has to say with respect. Following are suggestions for topics of discussion:

- The importance of overall good health
- TV ads and use of persuasion to con you
- How stress can promote illness and disease
- How to say "no" and when to "Just say no"
- Who they can be around and
- How to tell who they should not be around
- How to accept a person without accepting their sin
- How to be your own person and not be your friend

2 Corinthians 6:14 warns us not to be connected with unbelievers: for what fellowship does righteousness have with iniquity?

Teaching children to 'just say no' is a commitment to personal excellence, and setting clear boundaries as they learn to accept other people without accepting their way of life. This is vital to loving as God loves.

NOTES:

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