

Patient Parenting



Raising Your Kids
in the **Shadow**
of the **Cross**

JOHN JUERN

NORTHWESTERN PUBLISHING HOUSE
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Cover photos: Designpics, Shutterstock, Inc., SuperStock, Inc.
Art Director: Karen Knutson
Designer: Pamela Dunn

Scripture is taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

The “NIV” and “New International Version” trademarks are registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by International Bible Society. Use of either trademark requires the permission of International Bible Society.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—except for brief quotations in reviews, without prior permission from the publisher.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2005922840
Northwestern Publishing House
1250 N. 113th St., Milwaukee, WI 53226-3284
www.nph.net
© 2006 by Northwestern Publishing House
Published 2006
Printed in the United States of America
ISBN 13: 978-0-8100-1304-9
ISBN 10: 0-8100-1304-5

*To my children,
my grandchildren,
and all the children with whom
I've been privileged to work.*



Contents

Foreword	vii
1 Obedience and the Heart	1
2 Responsibility and Kids	3
3 Trust and the Parent-Child Relationship	5
4 Spanking	7
5 Honesty	9
6 Compulsive Lying	11
7 The Twos	13
8 The Fantasy World of Children	15
9 Treating Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder	17
10 Teaching Problem Solving	19
11 When Parents Are Afraid to Parent	21
12 Time-Outs	23
13 Do Your Children Know You Love Them?	25
14 Order in the Family	27
15 Attitudes about School	29
16 Crime and Consequence	31
17 Learning and the Senses	33
18 Neuroscience	35
19 Drugs and Alcohol	37
20 Childhood Depression	39

21	Suicide	41
22	At Times of Loss	43
23	Beyond Stress	45
24	Potty Training	47
25	Bed-Wetting	49
26	Spiritual Strength	51
27	Stuttering	53
28	Negative Attitude	55
29	Narcissism	57
30	Birth Order	59
31	Christian Discipline Is	61
32	Separation Anxiety	63
33	Memorizing Scripture	65
34	Compliant and Defiant Siblings	67
35	When Learning Becomes a Struggle	69
36	Homework Headaches	71
37	Repeating a Grade	74
38	When Parents Argue	77
39	Stop Yelling!	79
40	Trauma and Faith	81
41	Reading	83
42	Anger Management for Kids	85
43	Christian Fatherhood	87
44	Bedtime Habits	89
45	Divorce and Kids	91
46	Challenges That Come with Change	93
47	Sex and Gender Education	95
48	Teaching Kindness	98
49	A Checklist for Christian Parents	100



Foreword

Effective parenting in today's world is a monumental challenge. Good models are hard to find; there are almost as many parenting styles as there are parents. Many of the so-called experts who claim to promote parenting excellence do so from a purely humanistic perspective. And the messages that flow through the veins and arteries of our popular culture regarding the parental role are often shallow and misleading.

When *Lutheran Parent* began searching for the right person to write a column for the magazine, the bar was set high. Such an individual would be required to understand how precious children are, not only in the eyes of parents but in the eyes of a loving God as well. Furthermore, this writer would be expected to address some of the most difficult parenting issues with profoundly practical insight. And, as if the task of finding such an individual were not already difficult enough, each column needed to communicate a gospel-centered message with clarity, sensitivity, and in a generous, non-judgmental tone.

The Lord's answer to *Lutheran Parent's* dilemma was typically over-the-top. In addition to fulfilling all of the aforementioned requirements in superb fashion, John Juern brought to the column an exceedingly high level of professional expertise and a reputation in the Lutheran community for having a deep understanding of children and their needs. This volume represents

eight years of Dr. Juern's columns, proudly published on the pages of *Lutheran Parent* magazine between 1996 and 2004. It presents the difficult job of raising kids in today's world in a way that is thoroughly consistent with how Scripture portrays it . . . *in the shadow of Christ's cross.*

Kenneth J. Kremer

Editor



Obedience and the Heart

Why should children obey their parents? Ask different people and you get different answers: “They’re supposed to . . .” or “I’m the parent!” or “If they don’t, they’ll be grounded.” A Christian parent might reply, “The Bible tells children to obey their parents.” And it does. But none of these responses gets at the real heart of God-pleasing obedience.

The answer to that question sets Christian children apart from others. Take away Christian faith, and a child’s obedience is usually connected either to the fear of punishment or the promise of reward. For the Christian child, obedience to parents flows out of a love for Jesus. All of us as Christians—adults or children—do what we do because it’s our way of showing our gratitude for all that the Lord has done for us, beginning with his gracious gift of salvation. The Bible says it this way: “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

This is a fundamental principle: We obey God by living according to the Ten Commandments, and we live that Christian life out of love for him. So, the essence of all Christian discipline is serving the Lord with our lives.

Loving the Lord doesn’t happen on its own. The Holy Spirit plants the seed for such an obedient life at the moment of Baptism. And God is with Christian parents every day as they teach children that misbehavior and disobedience are sins. It’s really quite simple: Christian parents teach their children that wrong is wrong because it ignores God’s Ten Commandments.

But along with teaching children right from wrong, parents need to tell their children about the wonderful gift of forgiveness that is theirs through faith in Christ Jesus. Their sins are forgiven. That forgiveness brings joy. And the joy is expressed in the children's obedience. It's that message of forgiveness that motivates them.

Yes, a child will sin again. And probably again and again. But each time, there is forgiveness and joy and a renewed commitment to do God's will.

Parents don't need to go through this explanation every time their child does something wrong. The key is to remain consistent with God's will in setting rules and expectations for children; let the Ten Commandments set the standard.

There is still an appropriate time and place for time-outs, grounding, other types of punishment. Sin has consequences. Star charts posted on the refrigerator door and surprise hugs can still reinforce good behavior. But these things in and of themselves do not bring about compliant behavior. Christian children obey their parents because they love their Savior.



Responsibility and Kids

Children are not born with a natural inclination to be responsible. It doesn't suddenly appear at age 12 or in the first year of high school or when a teen gets a driver's license. Children learn responsibility by being taught it, by practicing it, and by observing it in their parents. When we fail to teach responsibility, we are, in reality, teaching children to be irresponsible.

Already at two years of age, a child can be taught to put toys away, put dirty clothes in the basket, carry plates and cups to the sink after a meal. At this early age, children do not make a distinction between work and play. They are eager to do the same things that grown-ups do. But they don't have the necessary skills, so a parent will have to do the activity with the child instead of just telling him or her what to do.

As children grow older, they can be taught to answer the phone properly, wash and put away dishes, clean up after pets, fold and put away clean clothes, and a lot of other common, everyday tasks. Children need to have jobs that are a part of their daily routine to learn the importance of routine and consistency. They need to learn that everyone in the family does a share of the work. Paying a child for routine jobs emphasizes materialism and does not provide an opportunity to learn the concept of serving. In giving children opportunities to do tasks around the house, the goal is not perfection or speed; the goal is learning responsibility. When a par-

ent is more concerned about getting the job done right or getting it done quicker than about teaching responsibility, it's unfortunate. As children learn to be responsible, they also develop self-confidence because they are experiencing success.

Children also learn about responsibility as they observe how their parents handle responsibility. They begin to understand a proper balance between work and free time. A workaholic parent, by example, teaches an inappropriate lesson about responsibility. A parent who frequently complains about his or her job will send a negative message to a child about work. Conversely, parents who share the joys of their work with their children communicate a positive work ethic.

A child who learns responsibility benefits from a positive self-image, but more important, the child and the parents share in developing their God-given gifts. After all, the ultimate reason for learning to become a responsible person is to give glory to God.



Trust and the Parent-Child Relationship

All relationships are based on trust. Children want and need to trust their parents. Parents want (and need) to trust their children. Trust makes honest communication possible; it builds relational bridges; it gives meaning to our respective roles; it provides security; it stimulates responsibility and caring. If a child never learns to trust, the results can be devastating.

In spiritual terms, we are born with a sinful nature that makes us unable to trust in God on our own. Only when the Holy Spirit has worked his miracle of faith in the heart of a sinner through Word and sacrament does the sinner have the capacity to trust in God's promises. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are the central truths to which God's people cling for their well-being. Jesus himself said, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me" (John 14:1). So our trust in God comes also as a gift from God. Without it we would be both hopeless and comfortless.

In human terms trusting isn't a natural reflex either; it must be learned. Even the world of psychology recognizes that children are born without the ability to trust. Developmentally, children learn to trust as they bond with their parents. A child who has never bonded tends to become an insecure, untrusting adult.

The bonding process begins already in the womb. As an unborn fetus identifies with the voice of its mother

and as her body nurtures the child she is carrying, a bond is being established between mother and child.

After birth, as a mother cares for, holds, feeds, talks to, and in general interacts with her child, the child's overall sense of stability and predictability is established. If a mother is not emotionally available to a child on a consistent basis, that binding attachment which helps to establish trust is not there.

Soon a child is ready to begin to generalize that trust to others. A child's loving, trusting relationship with his father is important because a father-child relationship (albeit an imperfect relationship among two sinful people) is an earthly representation of the relationship between a child and his or her heavenly Father. A father who is absent, unloving, or overly critical becomes a stumbling block for his child, making it difficult for the child to comprehend a loving heavenly Father.

Many adults have had to overcome childhood experiences that undermined their trust. Parents who extend their love to a child with forgiveness, honesty, and compassion are helping their child learn to trust people.



Spanking

Today most child-rearing experts argue that children should not be spanked. It's probably a knee-jerk reaction to the growing concern about physical abuse in families. The feeling is that spankings only teach a child to become physically aggressive. Of course, few if any child-rearing experts refer to God's Word for guidance and direction in arriving at their opinion. If they would, they would learn that spankings are neither forbidden nor commanded in Scripture. But Scripture does leave the door open for parents to use spanking as an appropriate form of discipline under certain circumstances.

Texts like Proverbs 13:24, "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him," have been interpreted by some to suggest that spankings are encouraged in Scripture. Others point out that the rod spoken of in these texts is a shepherd's rod, which was used only to gently prod and encourage. Whether we are speaking of physical punishments or verbal reprimands, Scripture is clear in stating that all Christian discipline is to be carried out with love, never out of anger or for revenge (Colossians 3:12).

Depending on how it is administered, a spanking can still be an effective part of Christian training. Along with verbal reprimands, setting consequences, and speaking words of encouragement, spankings are part

of the array of disciplinary tools available to help Christian parents shape the will of their child.

Here are a few things to consider as you decide how spankings might fit into your parenting style.

- ✦ Before administering a spanking, pray for wisdom and guidance.
- ✦ While a spanking should be close in time to the offense, a spanking should never be given if the parent's emotions are out of control.
- ✦ A spanking is a teaching opportunity. Make sure the child knows the reason for the spanking.
- ✦ Consider a child's age. He or she may be too young to make the connection between the behavior and the spanking. Or a child may be too old for the spanking if that action only creates resentment.
- ✦ Spankings should always be given on a child's bottom. Use your hand, nothing more. A slap on the face is not a spanking. If you find yourself using spanking as a threat, it is no longer a punishment reminder; it has degenerated into a symbol of power. Escalating frequency or the severity of spankings is another warning sign that spankings may no longer mean what you originally intended them to mean.
- ✦ Reserve spankings for defiant behavior. If a spanking is used for every form of misbehavior, it loses its effectiveness.
- ✦ Following the spanking, a child needs to be reassured of a parent's love and God's forgiveness.



Honesty

God made people to be truthful and honest in all things. But Satan, the father of lies and chief of dishonesty, seduced us into sin. Man's sinless and perfect nature was replaced with sin and all that is bad. By nature a child will lie, cheat, steal, and in general, be dishonest. David clearly stated, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5).

So, how does a child learn to be honest?

Parents must teach children what it means to be honest. Children are not born with that knowledge. The best way to teach honesty is to be honest. To a great extent, children become what their parents are. So parents must take care not to confuse children by giving a "do as I say, not as I do" example.

Help children understand the difference between playtime make-believe and lying about real issues. Creativity needs to be fostered, but not at the expense of truthfulness. While both are sinful, the deliberate, malicious, and defiant lie is more troubling than the impulsive, immature response of a child.

When a child chooses to be dishonest, try to determine why that choice was made. While dishonesty is always a sin, knowing the motivation behind the lie is helpful in teaching a child how to avoid that sin in the future. Is the child lying because he or she is fearful of the consequences of speaking the truth? Parents need

to stress the understanding and forgiving nature of their Savior. We all make mistakes. We all deserve punishment. But when we admit our mistake and receive forgiveness, we can all experience the removal of that guilt. Praise and thank children for being honest and truthful. We all like to receive recognition for actions that are out of the ordinary. And while we would like honesty to become a natural response, we know that it is a learned response. It needs positive reinforcement.

Finally, understand and teach children that being honest is not done out of a fear of punishment. As in compliance with all commandments, children are to be truthful out of love for the Lord. They need to know, “I show love for Jesus by being honest.”