

Making Your Children Mind Without Losing Yours

Mothering is a holy occupation. God has granted us the privilege of developing the fine art of Christian mothering. We are in partnership with Him to work holy things into the character of our children.

I. Pursue Personal Holiness

You cannot take your children farther along in the faith than you have gone. And you cannot proclaim what you don't possess! More of the Christian life is CAUGHT than TAUGHT as your children observe your faith-walk with the Lord.

Make it your goal to become a godly woman. Then you will BE a godly wife and mom. Seek to develop personal holiness and practical righteousness. Pro. 31:10 says, *Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.* Pro. 31:28-29. *Her children rise up and bless her; Her husband also, and he praises her, saying: "Many daughters have done nobly, But you excel them all."*

At conversion we are wholly redeemed, but not wholly renewed. **We bring a mind trained in depravity into our Christian conversion.** *Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind* (Rom. 12:2). How can we avoid being conformed to this world? By renewing your mind. How do we do that? Studying the Word, memorizing it, meditating on it, and sitting under godly preaching and solid Biblical teaching are just a few ways to renew the mind with God's Word. We need to be able to rightly divide the truth of God's Word and live by it in order to impact our children with it. *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth* (2 Tim. 2:15).

When our children leave home, they will take the memories we have made AND what we have put into them for the Lord.

II. Parent According to Biblical Proverbs and Principles

The Bible says, ***Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it*** (Prov. 22:6 color coding mine).

Train - The verb translated "train" comes from Arabic word (*chanakh*). It means "to give something into the mouth, to give to be tasted" It means "to affect the taste". Midwives put mashed dates on roof of a newborn's mouth to trigger the suckling response.

The way - "the bent, the direction" Carries the idea of an archer shaping a bow according to natural bent of wood. This is an injunction to parents to consider the child's nature, faculties, and temperament in the way directions, instructions, and discipline is given him.

He will not depart from it - refers to that training a child received in conformity with his nature, which becomes so deeply ingrained it becomes second nature. It has the idea of

that which is imprinted, inbred, becomes accustomed to. A child who has been given the chance to taste the goodness of the Lord through the influence of godly parents and has been trained according to his own bent, when he grows up he will not (easily) turn from that which has been deeply imprinted on him by his godly upbringing. This verse is not a promise but a principle that is generally true.

Done primarily through EXAMPLE, INSTRUCTION, and CORRECTION

I. The Early Years-Birth to Six-Obey and Respect Authority

If we intend to raise faithful children who live righteous lives, we must teach them the fundamental principle of *obedience* from their earliest days. Ephesians 6:1-2 says, *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor (or respect) your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise)*. Teach your young children to obey and respect authority.

Basically this is behavior modification, which works well for young children because it focuses on outward behavior. Praise what is right and correct what is not with verbal correction, time-out to defuse the situation (time-out, which for us was sitting in a chair in the middle of the kitchen for about 1 minute per age, can be useful to get your child to calm down, be separated from the problem, and get them self “pulled back together” and be a pleasant part of the family but it must not be over-used) a nap might be in order (because your toddler doesn’t have the developed vocabulary to articulate what is bothering him or the social skills to get along with others) distraction if possible, or a spanking if necessary.

Biblical discipline is not limited to punishment but it does include it. Involves instruction, correction, exhortation, encouragement, praise, direction, and punishment. Use lots of verbal instruction, exhortation, and godly examples to train up your child. But remember the Bible does command the use of spanking (corporal punishment) and a wise parent will use it when necessary.

Proverbs 13:24 says, *He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.*

Proverbs 22:15 says *Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him.* The use of corporal punishment is an essential part of parenting a young child and teaching him to obey. Use a rod, not your hand.

Several smacks with a rod (paint stirrer) will inflict enough pain to dismay him from repeating the offense, making the consequences of disobedience unforgettable. How a swat on the bottom can soften the heart, I do not know, but we used spanking by faith in God’s instructions as revealed in His Word!

The Bible is absolutely not inferring anything that is abusive. All Biblically discipline is to be firm but fair.

Spanking should not be over-used but it should be used as the Bible instructs. But it should be reserved for the worst of offenses. Start around 2 years (prior use “spats” on the hand or leg with a firm, “no”), most effective up to age 6, becomes less effective by age 9 and the experts generally agree spanking should never used after 12.

Punishment of any form

- Should be done without anger or emotion.
- It should be done immediately after the offense to be the most effective.
- It should be done privately and respectfully.
- You should begin with a verbal explanation of the offense to avoid any misunderstanding. The purpose is not to humiliate.
- It should be followed with hugs-chastening is a product of love for the child and not anger or revenge.
- It should be in the context of teaching them to obey and honor their parents and God.
- A time of prayer should complete the process.
- The purpose is always restorative in nature-teach and train

Any form of punishment should only be administered when the parent is totally calm, under the control of the Holy Spirit, and it should be tempered with love.

The goal of godly discipline is to train in righteousness and bring the child to repentance. Heb. 12:11 says, *All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful ; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*

If your discipline is producing anger (or anything less than repentance) you need to prayerfully reconsider your approach. The Bible condemns any correction done out of anger or exasperation, but it does not sanction leniency and over-indulgence either.

In the early years, you must establish your authority under God and teach your children to respectfully obey.

Parents, present a united front. A child could easily play one parent against another if they sense you and your spouse are not in total agreement on the issue of childrearing. Your goal is to teach your young child *obedience and respect for authority*-ultimately honor and obey God.

a. Let your child know that your joy does not depend on his behavior, but rather is found in your relationship with Jesus Christ. In John 15:11 Jesus said, *These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and you're your joy may be made full.* Children will disappoint you, irate and frustrate you, and even humiliate you publicly *and* sometimes it will be on purpose!

b. Recognize how to break the will and *not* the spirit of your child. Set house rules and consistently enforce them, making sure your child understands exactly what you expect out of them.

c. Know your child and find out what works with each individual personality. Prov. 27:23 says, *Know well the condition of your flocks.* Learn the difference between childishness and willful disobedience. In 1 Cor. 13:11 Paul said, *When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.* Childish behavior must be dealt with and you must train your child through it, but it is not the same of defiance and disobedience and it should not be harshly disciplined.

d. Never threaten to leave your child if he does not come when you call. This violates Scripture. Heb. 13:5 God said, *"I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you."*

II. The Middle Years-Six to Twelve-Character

The issue you will want to address in these middle years is *character*. In the early years you addressed defiant behavior and established authority and obedience. Now you will be faced with addressing the heart condition that is behind the outward behavior-like selfishness or pride. Addressing attitudes and building Christian character moves your child from simply *"obeying the rules"* to developing the ability to apply Biblical principles.

a. Do not humiliate your child, especially publicly. Try directing your child with your eye, or whisper instruction in his ear, or wait until you are alone with your child to correct his behavior, if possible. We had a code word to use in public that indicated to our boys the need to change their behavior quickly.

b. Positive reinforcement is a valuable tool to the parent that knows how to use it effectively. Prov. 3:27 says, *Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.*

This is not the same as bribery, which is a very ineffective technique because it puts all the power into the hands of the child (If you do this, then I will do this. What if your child decides the bribe is not worth the desired behavior? Then what are you going to do? You got nowhere to go with this. The power is in the hands of your child. Bad choice!) Reinforcement is not promising a reward for future behavior; it is praising desirable behavior. as instruction, encouragement, affirmation, correction, redirection, and praise. All are involved in Biblically training a child.

c. Build up your child in the Lord. Prov. 14:1 says, *The wise woman builds her home, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.* Your home is the place God ordained for your child to be raised in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Build confidence and a healthy self-image, based upon the Word of God, into your child. The world can be so cruel and should be in sharp contrast to your home. This distinction only serves to validate your Christian faith.

d. Use everyday events to talk about spiritual things. Deut. 8: 7 says, *And you shall teach them (the Scriptures) diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.* Endeavor to point your child to Jesus Christ throughout your day. It will be a life well spent.

Helping your child grow strong in Christian character during these years will move you away from dealing with your child like he/she was a preschooler. This will prepare them for the next stage of development – the teens.

III. The Teenage Years-Twelve to Eighteen-Wisdom

The issue you will want to help them grasp in these years is *wisdom*. Prov. 9:10 says, *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

Your teenager is coming up to the threshold of living a life that is independent from you. He (or she) will determine what he will believe and who he will worship – the One True God or a lesser idol.

Teen years are challenging. Prov. 31:25, *Strength and dignity are her clothing and she smiles at the future.* The virtuous woman does not dread any season of childhood.

His need for your direction will never be greater, **but he will resist any overt attempts to control him.** He is trying to become his own man and establish his own convictions, while developing his own unique individuality. No wonder these years are marked with angst!

Second Timothy 3:14-15 says, *“You, however, continue in the things you have learned and **become convinced of**, knowing from whom you have learned them; and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”* These are the years your child will “**become convinced**” of what they believe. Own his own faith.

Your teen must become motivated internally by a sense of awe and reverential fear for God, and no longer directed externally by rules alone. That was how you trained him **in the early years**. Then you helped him develop godly character **in the middle years**. Now he is ready to operate in the realm of wisdom, becoming ever more aware of his relationship to God and under His authority.

I am assuming that for 16 years you have established a strong relationship with you child based on love, integrity, respect and honor. You have exhibited a godly lifestyle and modeled devotional love for the Lord and the disciples of the faith. You are a Bible student. You have also made yourself a student of your child to understand and enter their world in order to impact them with your Christian values and godly lifestyle. I am

assuming you have made every effort to walk holy and blameless before them and the Lord.

If all of this is true, you will still be the more relevant relationship in their life even if they do not acknowledge it. During these years, stay the course and watch your child develop into a great kid, ready to move into the adult world fully equipped physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually.

IV. The Release-18-22 years-Dependence on God

Your goal as a godly parent is to see your child come to Christ and then embrace the things of God as their own living faith.

Throughout the two decades of your active parenting, you will want to see your child move from your total authority to the place of living under God's total authority. It is a slow and arduous journey but it will be well worth the investment of time and spiritual energy. Obviously the Holy Spirit of God must do His work; you cannot make your child believe right. God had given your child a will with which he must decide to receive or reject Christ. You cannot decide for him but your godly influence will carry a great amount of weight.

As you raise your child for Christ, make sure your goal is personal holiness and practical righteous. Your godly example will exert godly influence that will last a lifetime.

Make sure your lifelong goal is not limited to becoming a good mother; your greater goal should be to become a godly woman.

Be careful that you do not find your emotional fulfillment through your relationship with your child. This need must be met in Christ. Too many parents live their lives through their children and emotionally cripple them, making it almost impossible for their children to move into the adult world unencumbered and to fully cleave to their spouse.

When the time comes, release your child fully to the sovereignty and authority of God. Deliberately cut the apron strings and release your child into the adult world. Then sit back and watch the ways God will use your child! This is God's purpose and plan for disciplining His disciples.

Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her the product of her hands and let her works praise her in the gates (Prov. 31:30-3).

