

BIBLE LIFE MESSAGES

Biblical Parenting for Pre-Teens

1 Most Christian parents get to the place where they are ready for any help they can get in raising their children. In this message let's look at some of the Bible passages that can help us through the difficult times.

Most of us are guilty of breaking promises to our children. Our kids look up to us and rely on us to keep our word. When promises are broken, they can cause feelings of disappointment and hurt. When breaking promises becomes a habit, children begin to distrust their parents. Short tempers result and frustration develops in parents and children. The child's spirit begins to break. 2

Then . . .

I. A Communication Barrier is Erected

A communication barrier is erected. ³ **Bitterness begins as the result of a broken spirit.**

Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 15 says, **See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.** ⁴ Parents are included in God's chain of command in your family. **God's grace** to us is undeserved forgiveness. ⁵ When this grace is not reproduced in the attitudes of parents towards their children, **bitterness results.** Bitterness is the opposite of grace. ⁶

The problem occurs when parents, then, use incorrect methods to discipline. Ephesians, chapter 6, verse 4 states, **Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.** ⁷

Let's analyze the text here. **Exasperate**, in the original language, ¹ means, literally, "to provoke to anger", so,

¹ Παροργίζω.

“continue to irritate”. Parents get frustrated and angry, so we tend to do this. ⁸

Instead, God wants you to Bring up, ² “to cherish”, “nourish” and in this way “bring up” to maturity. ⁹

Training ³ here means “instruction” and “discipline”, “punishment” to improve behavior; “spank” (train by action). ¹⁰

Instruction ⁴ means “admonition”, “teaching”, “warning”, spoken words which cause children to learn. ¹¹

What does this mean? ¹²

Both training (discipline and spanking) and instruction (verbal admonition) are necessary for raising a child. Let me explain.

Several years ago, as the Family Life Chaplain at Fort Bliss, Texas, I taught parenting classes to soldiers

² Εκτρέφω.

³ Παιδεία.

⁴ Νουθεσία.

and their spouses. I emphasized the three ways for parents to help their young children learn.

1. The best way is to allow them to experience the “natural consequences” for the choices they make, good and bad. This is a matter of stepping back and allowing consequences to happen. For instance, if a child refuses to wear a raincoat in the rain, he will get wet! If he chooses to stay up too late at night, he will be very tired when he has to get up on schedule the next morning. But, as loving parents, we need to protect our kids from natural consequences that we believe are too severe or dangerous. I would not want my child to experience an electric shock or being burned by touching a dangerous object. So I would select “logical consequences”.

2. The second-best way is to step in and provide for them a “logical consequence” (or “related consequence”) for the choice they made. This consequence needs to be decided by the parent and be logically related to the child’s choice. This way he

will remember the bad decision by remembering the consequence resulting from it. For instance, if a child let's his cell phone interfere with an important task, like studying, take it away until study is complete. If they are riding a bike in the street when warned not to, take away the bike for awhile. If siblings are arguing while playing a game, take away the game.

3. Sometimes neither of the above methods seem to work. That's when biblical "training" might have to happen. In modern culture the very idea of using this method may be considered child abuse. So, hear me out before passing judgment! ¹³

Always try to remove the communication barrier by explaining the offense and why it is wrong. Give them a chance to explain their side of the story. It is important to stay calm and not discipline in anger. ¹⁴

Never over correct! Don't spank in anger or too severely. The rule in our family was three swats with the open hand in the rear area of the body God specifically designed for that purpose. Provide just

enough sting to accomplish the purpose. Three swats; regardless of the offense. When this procedure ceases to be effective, your child has probably become too old to use it. ¹⁵

Never leave leftover guilt. You need to follow through. I remember, particularly, our oldest son. He committed an offense, and was ready to suffer the consequences, but I was preoccupied with another matter. He was so distressed until I followed through with his consequence. His expression was one of relief. ¹⁶

But what is **our typical reaction?** ¹⁷

The teachings of psychology in my generation, against biblical “training”, resulted in a generation of bitter and rebellious children.

The wrong reaction is for parents to justify our actions. Do you, dad, always have to leave the impression that you are always right? ¹⁸ The right way

is to admit to your child when you are wrong and ask for their forgiveness. The Bible asks us to do that! ¹⁹

But we compensate for not admitting we are wrong by over generosity to try to make up for our wrong behavior, right? ²⁰

II. But – the Child Becomes Ungrateful

But the child becomes ungrateful. ²¹

The real cause is the attitude that the parents owe him their generosity in return for their failure to admit they were wrong. J. Edgar Hoover, the former head of the FBI, said, “The chief characteristic of a juvenile delinquent is the attitude that society owes them a living.” ²²

The problem is that the parents negotiated a tragic trade! Many parents refuse to humble themselves, admit they were wrong and ask their children’s forgiveness. The children, then, reciprocate by refusing their affection. ²³ The Bible says, Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who

take advice. ⁵ ₂₄ Again, He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy. ⁶ ₂₅ Finally, Second Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 12, When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise. ₂₆

These scriptures state that almost all contention stems from pride! ₂₇ So, shallow your pride, parents! Initiate reconciliation by asking your child for forgiveness. ₂₈

But **our typical reaction** is often, “When I was your age, I . . .” One of my kids, when she was a teen, told me, “When you were my age dinosaurs roamed the earth!” Come to think of it, I have trouble working a lot of my apps on my cell phone. Anyone today, under the age of fifty can do them with their eyes closed!

⁵ Proverbs 13:10.

⁶ Proverbs 28:13.

This attitude is what causes the generation gap. Your child becomes even more separated into his own little world. ²⁹

III. Then – the Child Becomes Rebellious

Then, the child becomes rebellious. ³⁰

The real cause is a rejection of authority. The Bible tells us, **People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God** ^{7 31}

When a child rejects parental authority, he removes himself from God's channel of authority, His family chain of command, and, consequently, God's protection! Ephesians, chapter 6, verses 1 through 3, **Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" — which is the**

⁷ II Timothy 3:2-4.

first commandment with a promise — “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” ³²

What a child thinks of daddy is often how he thinks of God! ⁸ ³³ Rejection of family authority leads to rejection of all authority! **Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.** The authorities that exist have been established by God. ⁹

34

The Bible says that **rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry!** ¹⁰ ³⁵ **Witchcraft is joining forces with Satan.** ³⁶ **Idolatry is a rejection of God! So, the fruit of rebellion is a rejection of God!** ³⁷

⁸ Proverbs 17:6 - Parents are the pride of their children.

⁹ Romans 13:1-2.

¹⁰ I Samuel 15:23.

The child sets himself up as his own authority. ³⁸ Like Adam and Eve at the tree, he desires to be like God! ¹¹
³⁹ He begins following Satan's example. **You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High."** ¹² ⁴⁰

The problem is you lost your child! If you lose your child's heart and mind, what do you have left? ⁴¹

What is a parent to do?

Colossians, chapter 3, verse 21, **Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.** ⁴²

Embitter ¹³ means to "provoke", "make resentful", "irritate", or "stir up a spirit of division". ⁴³

¹¹ Genesis 3:4-5 - "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

¹² Isaiah 14:13-14.

¹³ Ερεθίζω.

Discouraged ¹⁴ means “may be enraged”, “disheartened”, thus, “discouraged”. We get our English word “fume” from this word. ⁴⁴

So, what does this mean?

Don't add fuel to the fire but be an example of godliness to your children. First Timothy, chapter 4, verse 12 says, **Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.** ⁴⁵

What is our typical reaction? We nag. We increase our demands and tighten the restrictions, right?

This succeeds in driving them to seek companionship and encouragement elsewhere.

What do we do?

God's word provides the answers. But we feel more comfortable doing it the way we were raised.

¹⁴ Αθυμέω.

We may try the most recent parenting trend which is usually opposed to God's way! Or worse, we simply parent by trial and error with no direction at all! ⁴⁶

Let God's word direct your parenting!

<http://www.biblelifemessages.org>