

The Most Common Mistake in Child Rearing

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Based on my personal observation, it is **talking too much**, and closely related is **forgetting**. Please let me explain.

We have all seen parents cajoling, threatening, yelling, etc. in an attempt to get a child to behave. Typically the child will pause briefly, but shortly be right back at it.

Once I met a very fortunate, fine young man who said his mother was perfect and he had never known her to ever speak rudely. Yet, as a school principal she was a highly effective disciplinarian. Once she politely confronted a student with: "Either go back to class now, or be expelled." He complied immediately and warned others "not to mess with the principal." Such gentle words were so dramatically effective because the student knew they would be backed up with action.

If she had spoken harshly in anger, it still would have depended on backing her words with action, but: "*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*" Proverbs 15:1 So, if you speak harshly to your child, he will be angry and uncooperative.

The point then is to consistently back up your words with proper action, and to not

speak harshly, rudely or insultingly to your children. It is better to say nothing if you can't, won't or don't intend to back up your words with action. This is what I mean by "**talking too much.**" This is also known as **nagging**, and is detrimental to other human relationships. If you can't deal with misbehavior at the moment, you need to deal with it later, but if you habitually **forget**, the child learns to not obey you.

You may get so exasperated that you cannot help but get angry and speak harshly, but not if your child would obey your gentle words. But first a pattern of reasonableness and backing up your words with appropriate action must be established.

Popular modern methods tend to be things like "talk to your child", "reason with him", a bag of tricks to manipulate him into doing what you want, or physically restraining him. Parental authority tends to be denigrated. "*Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.*" Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness by definition means not susceptible to reason, so how can talking or reasoning be effective? Spanking has a bad name these days, so **don't dare do it in public**, else you risk severe interference from Child Protective Services. But surely there is more here than mere physical

spanking, meaning that some form of discipline is necessary, possibly as simple as no ice cream if that is sufficient. Discipline should be no harsher than necessary, and done in love, a gentle discipline will usually suffice. But if harsh words are used, anger will be stirred up and effective discipline will be more difficult.

The great confusion is being nice to a child versus disciplining him seem contradictory, and so it is hardly possible to do both. But if your discipline is concrete action, not scolding, then you can have a kind, gentle and loving attitude towards your child while you are disciplining him, and you can fulfill the Biblical ideal of "*...speaking the truth in love...*" Ephesians 4:15. None of us are perfect, and if we speak harshly we need to confess it to God and to our child: "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" 1 John 1:9 If we realize we were not reasonable, we can decide not to punish, but the parent needs to be in control, not the child.

A few other points. Pride is a very strong human emotion, and if you injure a child's pride, you will have a resistant child, and so you must avoid confrontation, ridicule, sarcasm, insult, etc. It is hardly obedience if you must get angry before the child obeys.

Deserved compliments are not spoiling a child, but showing him the love he needs. All commands should be fair and reasonable. Best are few rules with all obeyed rather than lots of rules with few obeyed. Knowing why he must do something should help a child do it better. A good test of whether a child is obedient is that he will come when asked.

There should be openness between child and parent so that the child can respectfully question the parent. If a child doesn't learn self-restraint when young, he will have to learn it by the hard knocks of life when older. Setting a good example is very important so that the parent has the moral standing to give out discipline, but without proper discipline a good example is not sufficient. God's kind of discipline does not suppress initiative, creativity and intelligence, but rather: "...being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness." Romans 6:18, making a child free to be all that he can be. A well behaved child naturally has self esteem because he knows in his God-given conscience that he is acting right and responsibly, and so will be naturally happy.

Some bad punishments. Scolding is not proper discipline because harsh and unloving words are the punishment. Isolation and separation, such as sending a child to his

room could breed alienation from the family. Ignoring wrongdoing is certainly not how God treats us His children. Telling a child he is doing wrong and/or quoting the Bible but permitting him to continue to act wrongfully will harden his conscience, and it will be more difficult for him to live at peace with his fellow man and obey God.

"Remove far from me falsehood and lies..."
Proverbs 30:8a I personally never would even let my children believe that there was a Santa Claus or Easter bunny. I wanted them later to not think God might also be a fairy tale, and to believe me if I told them that drugs or immoral practices are dangerous.

Have the goal of treating your children with respect, the same that you would give an honored acquaintance. That does not mean that you don't discipline when needed, or that you are not in control.

Society used to hold Christian values and was supportive of parental authority, but no longer. If your child resents you, he will be easy prey for society's anti-Christian values. There are no guarantees, particularly if your child is brain damaged by vaccines or there are factors beyond your control. But doing it God's way, disciplining in love and kindness and being a genuine friend to your child, holds out the best hope of success. I have observed many successful Christian

families who have adhered to God's principles.

Anyone who adheres to God's principles will benefit, but it is most effectively done with God's empowering Holy Spirit within you. The **Salvation of your eternal soul** is a personal matter between you and God and does not depend on traditions, human effort or belonging to any church, religion or organization: *"I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways"* Jeremiah 17:10a No matter what kind of person you are or what you have done: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* 1 John 1:9 Pray today to put all your faith in Jesus Christ: *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."* John 3:16 Then study the Bible to live in obedience to God: *"...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."* 2 Corinthians 5:17