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Enforcing Boundaries with Children

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Enforcing Boundaries with Children

How seriously do you take your responsibilities as a parent? Do you believe in setting limits and boundaries? Many people these days are saying, “Don’t pressure your child. If they don’t want to do it, don’t force them.”

The Bible has this to say about that kind of thinking: *“The child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame”* (Proverbs 29:15). The crime rate among our children is rising, and parents need to be more in tune with their God given role regarding their children.

You and your partner are a team, and as such need to mutually design a playing field for your children that consists of reasonable rules and boundaries that will give them direction. These give you as parents a framework for guidance and training, and set the stage for good supervision. It is wise to take into consideration your children’s interests and needs. But make sure you are the one that calls the shots as to what the rules are going to be, not your children.

Put your requests to them in the form of an affirmative directive, rather than as a question. Not: “Would you like to go to bed?” but instead saying, “It’s time for bed.” That’s *“train[ing] up a child in the way that he should go”* (Proverbs 22:6). When you ask a question you’re giving your child the freedom to ignore what you want them to do or to even say “No” to what needs to be done. When that happens, and you don’t do anything about it, you’re teaching them non-compliance.

As loving and responsible parents, it is your responsibility to teach your children to comply with the reasonable limits you have set for them, keeping in mind you have set these rules and limits for them in their best interests. When you request that your children do something in a certain way, make your request with confident expectation that they are going to do what you are asking them to do.

Sometimes your children will need help in obeying your rules. For instance, the quickest way to help your child get into the house, if he refuses to obey, is to pick him up, or gently lead him into the house. You are helping him to comply.

Teaching your children to comply with reasonable limits is one of the best things you can do for them in terms of what they’ll need to do when they are adults, having to comply with the expectations of an employer or group they are in. They won’t

always have people in authority who are nice to them, but they will learn to do what they are asked to do because they have been asked to do it, not because people are nice to them.

Having the ability to comply with reasonable limits is a wonderful gift you can give your children.

Take a step . . .

Memorize the following verses:

“Train up a child in the way he should go” (Proverbs 22:6).

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).